

THE
WAY TO KEEP HIM.

A
COMEDY.

BY ARTHUR MURPHY, ESQ.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT THE
THEATRES-ROYAL, DRURY-LANE AND COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOKS,
By Permission of the Managers.

"The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation."

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M DCC XCII.



TO
MRS. ABINGTON.

MADAM,

YOU will be surprised, at this distance of time, and in this public manner, to receive an answer to a very polite letter, which you addressed to me in the course of the last summer at Yarmouth. In a strain of vivacity, which always belongs to you, you invite me to write again for the Stage. You tell me, that having gone through the Comedies of THE WAY TO KEEP HIM, ALL IN THE WRONG, and THREE WEEKS AFTER MARRIAGE, you now want more from the same hand. I am not bound, you say, by my resolution, signified in a Prologue about ten years ago, to take my leave of the Dramatic Muse. At the perjuries of poets, as well as lovers, Jove laughs; and the public, you think, will be ready to give me a general release from the promise. All this is very flattering. If the following Scenes, at the end of five-and-twenty years, still continue to be a part of the public amusement, I know to what cause I am to ascribe it. Those graces of action, with which you adorn whatever you undertake, have given to the Piece a degree of brilliancy, and even novelty, as often as you have repeated it. I am not unmindful of the Performers who first obtained for the Author the favour of the Town: a GARRICK, a YATES, a CIBBER, united their abilities; and who can forget Mrs. CLIVE? They have all passed away, and the COMEDY might have passed with them, if you had not so frequently placed it in a conspicuous light.

The truth is, without such talents as yours, all that the Poet writes is a dead letter. He designs for representation, but it is the Performer that gives to the draught, however

justly traced, a form, a spirit, a countenance, and a mind. All this you have done for the WIDOW BELLMOUR; and that excellence in your art, which you are known to possess, can, no doubt, lend the same animation to any new characer. But, alas! I have none to offer. That tinder in the Poet's mind, which, as Doctor YOUNG says, takes fire from every spark, I have not found, even though you have endeavoured to kindle the flame. Could I write, as you can act, I should be proud to obey your commands: but after a long disuse, how shall I recover the train of thinking necessary for plot, humour, incident, and character?

In the place of novelty, permit me to request that The Way to Keep Him may be inscribed to you. You are intitled to it, Madam; for your talents have made the Play your own. A Dedication, I grant, at this period of time, comes rather late; but being called upon for a new edition, I have retouched the dialogue, and perhaps so reformed the whole, that, in its present state, it may be deemed less unworthy of your acceptance. It is, therefore, my wish, that this Address may in future attend the Comedy, to remain (as long as such a thing can remain) a tribute due to the GENIUS OF MRS. ABINGTON, and a mark of that esteem, with which I subscribe myself,

Madam,

Your real admirer,

And most obedient Servant,

ARTHUR MURPHY.

*Lincoln's-Inn,
25th Nov. 1785.*

PROLOGUE.

*WHEN first the haughty critic's dreadful rage,
With Gothic fury, over-ran the stage,
Then Prologues rose, and strove with varied art
To gain the soft accesses to the heart.
Thro' all the tuneful tribe th' infection flew,
And each Great Genius—his petition drew;
In formâ pauperis address'd the Pit,
With all the gay antithesis of wit.
Their sacred art poor poets own'd a crime;
They sigh'd in simile, they bow'd in rhyme.
For charity they all were forc'd to beg;
And every Prologue was "a wooden leg."*

*Next these a hardy, manly race appear'd,
Who knew no dulness, and no critics fear'd.
From Nature's store each curious tint they drew,
Then boldly held the piece to public view:
"Lo! here, exact proportion! just design!
"The bold relief! and the unerring line!
"Mark in soft union how the colours strike!
"This, Sirs, you will, or this you ought to like."
They bid defiance to the foes of wit,
"Scatter'd like ratsbane up and down the Pit."*

*Such Prologues were of yore;—our bard to-night,
Disdains a false compassion to excite:
Nor too secure your judgment would oppose;
He packs no jury, AND HE DREADS NO FOES.
To govern here no party can expect,
An audience will preserve its own respect.*

*To catch the foibles, that misguide the fair,
From trifles spring, and end in lasting care,
Our author aims ; nor this alone he tries,
But as fresh objects, and new manners rise,
He bids his canvas glow with various dyes ;
Where sense and folly mix in dubious strife,
Alternate rise, and struggle into life.
Judge if with art the mimic strokes he blend ;
If amicably light and shade contend ;
The mental features if he trace with skill ;
See the Piece first, then damn it if you will.*

Dramatis Personae.

DRURY-LANE.

Men.

LOVEMORE,	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Wroughton.
Sir BASHFUL CONSTANT,	-				-	Mr. King.
Sir BRILLIANT FASHION,	-				-	Mr. Dodd.
WILLIAM, <i>servant to Lovemore,</i>	-				-	Mr. R. Palmer.
SIDEBBOARD, <i>servant to Sir Bashful,</i>	-				-	Mr. Burton.
POMPEY, <i>a black servant,</i>	-	-			-	Miss Gaudry.
JOHN,	-	-	-	-	-	Mr. Phillimore.

Women.

Mrs. LOVEMORE,	-	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Ward.
The Widow BELLMOUR,	-	-	-		-	Miss Farren.
Lady CONSTANT,	-	-	-		-	Mrs. Kemble.
MUSLIN, <i>maid to Mrs. Lovemore,</i>	-				-	Miss Pope.
MIGNIONET, <i>maid to Mrs. Bellmour,</i>	-				-	Miss Tidswell.
FURNISH, <i>maid to Lady Constant,</i>	-				-	Miss Heard.

SCENE, *London.*



THE WAY TO KEEP HIM.

ACT I. SCENE I.

*An Apartment in LOVEMORE'S House. WILLIAM and SIDEB-
BOARD discovered at a Game of Cards.*

William.

A PLAGUE go with it! I have turned out my game: Is
forty-seven good?

Side. Equal.

Will. Confound the cards! tierce to a queen?

Side. Equal.

Will. There again! ruined, stock and block: nothing can
save me. I don't believe there is a footman in England
plays with worse luck than myself. Four aces are fourteen.

Side. That's hard, cruel by Jupiter! Aces against me every
time. 10

Will. Four aces are fourteen: fifteen. [Plays.]

Side. There's your equality.

Will. Very well: I turned out my point. Sixteen; [Plays.]
seventeen. [Plays.]

Enter MUSLIN.

Mus. There's a couple of you, indeed! You are so fond
of the vices of your betters, that you are scarce out of your

beds, but you must imitate them and their profligate ways.
Set you up forsooth!

18

Will. Pr'ythee be quiet, woman, do. Eighteen. [*Plays.*

Mus. Upon my word!—With your usual ease, Mr. Coxcomb.

Will. Manners, Mrs. Muslin: you see Mr. Sideboard here; he is just come on a message from Sir Bashful Constant. Have some respect for a stranger. Nineteen, clubs. [*Plays.*

Mus. It would become Mr. Sideboard to go back with his answer, and it would become you to send my lady word——

Will. Command your tongue, Mrs. Muslin: you'll put me out. What shall I play?—He will go back with his answer in good time. Let his master wait till it suits our conveniency. Nineteen, clubs: where shall I go now? 30

Mus. Have done with your folly, Mr. Impertinent. My lady desires to know——

Will. I tell you, woman, my master and I desire to have nothing to do with you and your lady. Twenty, diamonds.

[*Plays.*

Mus. But I tell you, Mr. Brazen, that my lady desires to know at what hour your master came home last night, and how he does this morning?

Will. Ridiculous! Don't disturb us with that nonsense now; you see I am not at leisure. I and my master are resolved to be teased no more by you; and so, Mrs Go-between, you may return as you came. What the devil shall I play? We will have nothing to do with you, I tell you. 42

Mus. You'll have nothing to do with us? But you shall have to do with us, or I'll know the reason why. [*She snatches the cards from him, and throws them about.*]

Will. Death and fury! this meddling woman has destroyed my whole game. A man might as well be married, as be treated in this fashion.

Side. I shall score you for this, Mr. William : I was sure of the cards, and that would have made me up.

Will. No you'll score nothing for this. You win too much of me. I am a very pretty annuity to you. 51

Side. Annuity, say you? I lose a fortune to you in the course of the year. How could you, Mrs. Muslin, behave in this sort to persons of our dignity?

Mus. Decamp with your dignity; take your answer to your master: turn upon your rogue's heel, and rid the house.

Side. I sha'n't dispute with you. I hate wrangling: I leave that to lawyers and married people; they have nothing else to do. Mr. William, I shall let Sir Bashful know that Mr. Lovemore will be at home for him. When you come to our house, I'll give you your revenge. We can have a snug party there, and I promise you a glass of choice Champagne: it happens to be a good batch; Sir Bashful gets none of it: I keep it for my own friends. *Au revoir.* [Exit.

Will. [To Muslin] You see what mischief you have made.

Mus. Truce with your foolery: and now, sir, be so obliging as to send my lady an answer to her questions: How and when your rakehelly master came home last night?

Will. I'll tell you one thing, Mrs. Muslin; you and my master will be the death of me at last. In the name of charity, what do you both take me for? Whatever appearances may be, I am but of mortal mould; nothing supernatural about me. 73

Mus. Upon my word, Mr. Powder-Puff!

Will. I have not, indeed; and flesh and blood, let me tell you, can't hold it always at this rate. I can't be for ever a slave to Mr. Lovemore's eternal frolics, and to your second-hand airs.

Mus. Second-hand airs!

Will. Yes, second-hand airs! you take them at your ladies' toilets with their cast gowns, and so you descend to us with

them.—And then on the other hand, there's my master !—Because he chooses to live upon the principal of his health, and so run out his whole stock as fast as he can, he must have my company with him in his devil's dance to the other world ! Never at home till three, four, five, six in the morning.

87

Mus. Ay, a vile ungrateful man ! always ranging abroad, and no regard for a wife that dotes upon him. And your love for me is all of a piece. I have no patience with you both ; a couple of false, perfidious, abandoned profligates !

Will. Hey ! where is your tongue running ? My master, as the world goes, is a good sort of a civil kind of a husband ; and I, heaven help me ! a poor simpleton of a constant, amorous puppy, who bears with all the whims of my little tyrant here. Come and kiss me, you jade, come and kiss me.

97

Mus. Paws off, Cæsar. Don't think to make me your dupe. I know when you go with him to this new lady, this Bath acquaintance ; and I know you are as false as my master, and give all my dues to your Mrs. Mignonet there.

Will. Hush ! not a word of that. I am ruined, pressed, and sent on board a tender directly, if you blab that I trusted you with that secret.—But to charge me with falsehood ! —injustice and ingratitude !—My master, to be sure, does drink an agreeable dish of tea with the widow. He has been there every evening this month past. How long things are to be in this train, heaven only knows. But he does visit there, and I attend him. I ask my master, sir, says I, what time will you please to want me ? He fixes the hour, and I strut by Mrs. Mignonet, without so much as tipping her a single glance. She stands watering at the mouth, and ' a pretty fellow that,' says she : Ay, gaze on, say I, gaze on : I know what you would be at : you would be glad to have me : but sour grapes, my dear ; and so home I come, to cherish my

own lovely little wanton: you know I do, and after toying with thee, I fly back to my master, later indeed than he appoints, but always too soon for him. He is loth to part: he lingers and dangles, and I stand cooling my heels. Oh! to the devil I pitch such a life. 120

Mus. Why don't you strive to reclaim the vile man?

Will. Softly; not so fast. I have my talent to be sure; yes, I must acknowledge some talent. But can you suppose that I have power to turn the drift of his inclinations? Can I give him a new taste, and lead him as I please? And to whom? To his wife? Ridiculous! A wife has no attraction now; the spring of the passions flies back; it won't do.

Mus. Fine talking! and you admire yourself for it, don't you? Can you proceed, sir? 129

Will. I tell you a wife is out of date: the time was, but that's all over; a wife is a drug now; mere tar-water, with every virtue under heaven, but nobody takes it.

Mus. Have done, or I'll print these ten nails upon your rogue's face.

Will. Come and kiss me, I say.

Mus. A fiddlestick for your kisses, while you encourage your master to open rebellion against the best of wives.

Will. I tell you 'tis all her own fault. Why does not she study to please him as you do me. Come and throw your arms about my neck. 140

Mus. As I used to do, Mr. Impudence?

Will. Then I must force you to your own good. [*Kisses her.*] Pregnant with delight! Egad, if my master was not in the next room—— [*Bell rings.*

Mus. Hush! my lady's bell: how long has he been up?

Will. He has been up——[*Kisses her.*] 'Sdeath! you have set me all on fire. [*Kisses her.*

Mus. There, there; have done now; the bell rings again. What must I say? When did he come home? 149

Will. He came home—[*Kisses her.*—he came home at five this morning; damned himself for a blockhead; [*Kisses.*] went to bed in a surly humour; was tired of himself and every body else. [*Bell rings, he kisses her.*] And he is now in tip-toe spirits with Sir Brilliant Fashion in that room yonder.

Mus. Sir Brilliant Fashion? I wish my lady would mind what he says to her—You great bear! you have given me such a flush in my face! [*Takes a pocket looking-glass.*] I look pretty well, I think. There—[*kisses him.*—have done and let me be gone. [*Exit.*

Will. There goes high and low life contrasted in one person. She has not dived to the bottom of my master's secrets; that's one good thing. What she knows, she'll blab. We shall hear of this widow from Bath: but the plot lies deeper than they are aware of. Inquire they will; and let 'em, say I; their answer will do 'em no good. 'Mr. Love-
'more visit the widow Bellmour?' We know 'no such person.' That's what they'll get for their pains. Their puzzle will be greater than ever, and they may sit down to chew the cud of disappointed malice.—Hush! my master and Sir Brilliant: I'll take care of a single rogue, and get me out of their way. [*Exit.*

Enter LOVEMORE and Sir BRILLIANT.

Love. My dear Sir Brilliant, I must both pity and laugh at you. Thou art metamorphosed into the most whimsical being! 175

Sir Bril. If your raillery diverts you, go on with it. This is always the case: apply for sober advice, and your friend plays you off with a joke.

Love. Sober advice! very far gone indeed. There is no such thing as talking soberly to the tribe of lovers. That

eternal absence of mind that possesses you all! There is no society with you. I was damnable company myself, when I was one of the pining herd: but a dose of matrimony has cooled me pretty handsomely; and here comes *repetatur haustus*.

Enter MUSLIN.

Mus. My lady sends her compliments, and begs to know how you do this morning.

Love. [*Aside to Sir Bril.*] The novelty of the compliment is enlivening—it is the devil to be teased in this manner. What did you say, child? 190

Mus. My lady hopes you find yourself well this morning.

Love. Ay, your lady:—give her my compliments, and tell her—and tell her I hope she is well, and— [*Laughs.*]

Mus. She begs you won't think of going out without seeing her.

Love. To be sure, she has such variety every time one sees her—my head aches wofully—tell your lady—I shall be glad to see her; I'll wait on her—[*Laughs.*] tell her what you will.

Mus. A brute!—I shall let my lady know, sir. [*Exit.*]

Love. My dear Sir Brilliant, you see me an example before your eyes. Put the widow Bellmour out of your head, and let my Lord Etheridge be the victim for you. 203

Sir Bril. Positively no; my pride is piqued. My Lord Etheridge shall find me a more formidable rival than he imagines. By the way, how long has the noble peer been in England?

Love. His motions are unknown to me.—[*Aside.*] I don't like that question.—His lordship is in France, is not he?

Sir Bril. No; he is certainly returned. The match is to be concluded privately.—He visits her *incog*.

Love. [*Forcing a laugh.*] Oh! no; that can't be; my Lord Etheridge loves parade. I cannot help laughing. The jealousy of you lovers is for ever conjuring up phantoms to torment yourselves. My dear Sir Brilliant wait for realities; there are enough in life, and you may teach your fancy to be at rest, and give you no further trouble.

Sir Bril. Nay, don't let your fancy run away with you. What I tell you, is the real truth. 219

Love. Well, if it be true, and if Lord Etheridge is come to England to marry, do you go to France not to marry, and you will have the best of the bargain.

Enter WILLIAM.

Will. Sir Bashful Constant is in his chariot at the upper end of the street, and, if your honour is at leisure, he will wait upon you.

Love. Have not I sent him word I should be at home? Let him come as soon as he will. [*Exit William.*] Another instance, Sir Brilliant, to deter you from all thoughts of matrimony. 229

Sir Bril. Po! hang him; he is no precedent for me. A younger brother, who lived in middling life, comes to a title and an estate on the death of a consumptive baronet; marries a woman of quality, and now carries the primitive ideas of his narrow education into high life. Don't you remember when he had chambers in Fig-tree Court, and used to saunter and lounge away his time in Temple coffee-houses? The fellow is as dull as a bill in Chancery.

Love. But he is improved since that time.

Sir Bril. Impossible; don't you see how he goes on? He knows nothing of the world; if his eyes meet yours, he blushes up to his ears, and looks suspicious, as if he imagined you have a design upon him. 242

Love. I can explain that part of his character. He has a mortal aversion to wit and raillery, and dreads nothing so much as being laughed at for being particular.

Sir Bril. And so, fearing to be ridiculous, he becomes substantially so every moment.

Love. Even so, and if you look at him, he shrinks back from your observation, casting a sly, slow, jealous eye all round him, like Miss Bumpkin in a country village, awkwardly endeavouring to conceal what the increase of her shape discovers to the whole parish. 252

Sir Bril. And then his behaviour to his lady!

Love. Why, as to that point, I don't think he hates her. His fear of ridicule may be at the bottom. He has strange notions about the dignity of a husband. There is a secret which he would fain tell me, and yet he is shy, and he hints, and he hesitates, and then he retreats back into himself, and ends just where he began. But, with all his faults, he has fits of good-nature.—There—his chariot's at the door.

Sir Bril. Lady Constant, you mean, has fits of good-nature. Have you made any progress there? 262

Love. That's well from you, who is the formidable man in that quarter.

Sir Bril. Oh! no; positively, no pretence, no colour for it.

Love. Don't I know that you have made advances?

Sir Bril. Advances! I pity my Lady Constant, and—

Love. Well, that's generous—Hush! I hear him coming. Sir Brilliant, I admire your amorous charity of all things!

Enter Sir BASHFUL CONSTANT.

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, I have taken the liberty—but you seem to be busy, and I intrude perhaps. 272

Love. Oh, by no means: walk in, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. Sir Brilliant, I am glad to see you.

[*Bows awkwardly.*]

Sir Bril. You do me honour, sir. I hope you left my lady well.

Sir Bash. I can't say, sir; I am not her physician.

Sir Bril. [*Aside.*] An absurd brute!—Lovemore, I'll just step and pay a short visit to our friend over the way.

Love. Why in such a hurry? 280

Sir Bril. I shall return immediately. I'll be with you before you are dressed. Sir Bashful, I kiss your hand.

[*Exit.*]

Sir Bash. I am glad he is gone. I have something, Mr. Lovemore, that I want to advise with you about.

Love. Have you?

Sir Bash. I have had another brush with my wife.

Love. I am sorry for it, Sir Bashful.—[*Aside.*] I am perfectly glad of it.

Sir Bash. Pretty warm the quarrel was. She took it in a high tone. Sir Bashful. says she, I wonder you will disgrace yourself at this rate. You know my pin-money is not sufficient. The mercer and every body dunning me! I can't go on after this fashion, says she, and then something about her quality.—You know, Mr. Lovemore—[*Smiling.*]—she is a woman of high quality. 295

Love. Yes, and a very fine woman.

Sir Bash. No, no, no; not much of that—and yet—[*Looks at him and smiles.*]—do you think her a fine woman?

Love. Undoubtedly; where do you see any body that outshines her?

Sir Bash. Why to be sure—[*Smiling.*]—one does not often see her eclipsed. I think she is what you may call a fine woman. She keeps good company.

Love. The very best.

Sir Bash. Yes, yes; your tiptop, none else. And yet to encourage her too far were dangerous. Too complying a husband makes but a sorry figure in the eyes of the world.

Love. The world will talk, Sir Bashful. 308

Sir Bash. Too fast, Mr. Lovemore. Their tongues will run on, and one does not like to give them a subject. I answered her stoutly: Madam, says I, a fig for your quality: I am master in my own house, and who do you think—*[Winks at Lovemore.]*—putting myself in a passion, you know—Who do you think is to pay for your cats and your dogs, and your monkeys, and your squirrels, and your gaming debts?

Love. How could you? That was sharply said.

Sir Bash. Yes; I gave it her. But for all that I am main good-natured at the bottom.

Love. You was not in earnest then? 320

Sir Bash. No, no; that's the point: a man must keep up his own dignity. I'll tell you what I did.

Love. Well—you did what's proper, I dare say.

Sir Bash. I hope you'll think so.—Don't laugh at me.—Come, I will tell you. I went to her mercer sily, and paid him the money. *[Smiling.]*

Love. Did you?

Sir Bash. *[Looking alarmed.]* Was not it right?

Love. It was elegant.

Sir Bash. I am glad you approve. I took care to save appearances. One would not have the world know it. 331

Love. By no means.

Sir Bash. It would make them think me too uxorious.

Love. So it would—*[Aside.]* I must encourage that notion. While you live, guard against being too uxorious. Though our wives deserve "our fondness," the world will laugh at us;—and, hark ye, if our wives don't deserve it, they'll laugh at us the more.

Sir Bash. I know it. And so, says I, Mr. Lutestring, there's your money, but tell nobody that I paid it slily.

Love. Why, that's doing a genteel thing by stratagem.— Admirably contrived ! 342

Sir Bash. I think it was. But I have a deeper secret for you.

Love. Have you ?

Sir Bash. I have.—May I trust you ?

Love. Now, there you hurt me. I feel that, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. I beg your pardon. I know you are my friend. I have great confidence in you. You must know—Look ye, Mr. Lovemore—you must know—

Enter MUSLIN.

Mus. My lady desires to know if you choose a dish of tea this morning. 352

Love. Po ! ridiculous !—Tell your mistress—Go about your business. [Turns her out.

Sir Bash. I see how it is. He does not care a cherry-stone for his wife.

Love. Such impertinence !—Well, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. He does not value her a pinch of snuff. [Aside.

Love. Well, I am all attention.

Sir Bash. It does not signify. A foolish affair. I won't trouble you. 361

Love. Nay, that's unkind. It will be no trouble.

Sir Bash. Well, well, I—I—Do you think Muslin did not overhear us ?

Love. Not a syllable. Come, we are safe.

Sir Bash. I don't know but—Let me ask you a question first—Have you any regard for your lady ?

Love. The highest value for her. But then, you know, appearances—

Sir Bash. Right !—I repose it with you.—You must know,

Mr. Lovemore, as I told you, I am at the bottom very good-natured, and though it may be thought——We are interrupted again.

373

Enter Sir BRILLIANT.

Sir Bril. Lovemore, I have paid my visit.

Love. Pshaw!——this is unlucky——You are as good as your word, Sir Brilliant.

Sir Bril. Perhaps you have business?

Sir Bash. No, no business—[*Turns to Lovemore.*] There's no proceeding now——I was going—[*To Sir Brilliant.*]——Mr. Lovemore, I wish you a good day.

Love. Po!—Pr'ythee, you shan't leave me yet. 381

Sir Bash. I must; I can't stay.—[*Aside to Lovemore.*] Another time. Suppose you call at my house at one o'clock.

Love. With all my heart.

Sir Bash. Do so; nobody shall interrupt us. Mr. Lovemore, I take my leave. Sir Brilliant, I kiss your hand.—You won't forget, Mr. Lovemore?

Love. Oh! no; depend upon me.

Sir Bash. A good morning. He is the only friend I have. [Exit.

Love. Ha, ha! you broke in in the most critical moment. He was just going to be delivered of his secret. 391

Sir Bril. I beg your pardon. How could you let me?

Love. Nay, no matter. I shall worm it out of him.

Enter MUSLIN.

Mus. My lady, sir, is quite impatient.

Love. Po! for ever teasing! I'll wait upon her presently. [Exit Muslin.

Sir Bril. I'll step and chat with her while you dress. May I take the liberty?

Love. You know you may : no ceremony. How could you ask me such a question ?——Apropos, Sir Brilliant, I want a word with you. Step with me into the study for a moment.

401

Sir Briu. I attend you.

Love. Poor Sir Bashful !——ha, ha !——a ridiculous unaccountable——What does he mean ?

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

Another Apartment. Mrs. LOVEMORE at her Tea-Table.

Mrs. Love. This trash of tea ! I don't know why I drink so much of it. Heigho !——What keeps Muslin ? Surely never was an unhappy woman treated with such cruel indifference ; nay, with such open, such undisguised insolence of gallantry.

Enter MUSLIN.

Mrs. Love. Well, Muslin, have you seen his prime minister ?

411

Mus. Yes, ma'am, I have seen Mr. William. He says his master is going out, according to the old trade, and he does not expect to see him again till to-morrow morning. Mr. Lovemore is now in the study. Sir Brilliant Fashion is with him : I heard them, as I passed by the door, laughing as loud as two actors in a comedy.

Mrs. Love. About some precious mischief, I'll be sworn, and all at my cost. Heigho !

Mus. Dear ma'am, why chagrine yourself about a vile man, that is not worth——no, as I hope for mercy, not worth a single sigh ?

422

Mrs. Love. What can I do, Muslin ?

Mus. Do, ma'am!—If I was as you, I'd do for him. If I could not cure my grief, I'd find some comfort, that's what I would.

Mrs. Love. Comfort! alas! there is none for me. 427

Mus. And whose fault then? Would any body but you—It provokes me to think of it—Would any but you—young, handsome, with wit, graces, talents,—would any body, with so many accomplishments, sit at home here as melancholy as a poor servant out of place?—And all for what? For a husband! And such a husband! What do you think the world will say of you, ma'am?

Mrs. Love. I care not what they say, I am tired of the world, and the world may be tired of me, if it will. My troubles are to myself only, and I must endeavour to bear them. Who knows what patience may do? If Mr. Love-more has any feeling left, my conduct and his own heart may one day incline him to do me justice. 440

Mus. But, dear ma'am, that's waiting for dead men's shoes. Incline him to do you justice!—What signifies expecting and expecting? Give me a bird in the hand. If all the women in London, who happen to be in your case, were to sit down and die of the spleen, what would become of the public places? They might turn Vauxhall to a hop-garden; make a brewhouse of Ranelagh, and let both the playhouses to a methodist preacher. We should not have the racketting we have now. John, let the horses be put to.—John, go to my Lady Trumpabout, and invite her to a small party of twenty or thirty card tables.—John, run to my Lady Catgut, and let her know I'll wait upon her ladyship to the opera.—John, run as fast as ever you can, with my compliments to Mr. Varney, and tell him it will be the death of me, if I have not a box for the new play. Lord bless you, ma'am, they rantipole it about this town, with as uncon-

cerned looks, and as florid outsides, as if they were treated at home like so many goddesses; though every body knows possession has ungodded them all long ago, and their husbands care no more for them, no, by Jingo, no more than they care for their husbands. 461

Mrs. Love. At what a rate you run on!

Mus. It is enough to make a body run on. If every body thought like you, ma'am——

Mrs. Love. If every body loved like me!

Mus. A brass thimble for love, if it is not returned by love. What the deuce is here to do? Love for love is something: but to love alone, where's the good of that? Shall I go and fix my heart upon a man, who shall despise me for that very reason? And 'ay,' says he, 'Poor fool! I see she adores me. The woman is well enough, only she has one inconvenient circumstance about her; I am married to her, and marriage is the devil.'

Mrs. Love. Will you have done?

474

Mus. I have not half done, ma'am. And when the vile man goes a rogueing, he smiles impudently in your face, 'and I am going to the chocolate-house, my dear; amuse yourself in the mean time, my love.' Fye upon 'em! I know 'em all. Give me a husband that will enlarge the circle of my innocent pleasures: but a husband now-a-days is no such thing. A husband now is nothing but a scare-crow, to shew you the fruit, but touch it if you dare. The devil's in 'em, the Lord forgive me for swearing. A husband is a mere bugbear, a snap-dragon, a monster; that is to say, if one makes him so, then he is a monster indeed; and if one do not make him so, then he behaves like a monster; and of the two evils, by my troth——But here, ma'am, here comes one who can tell you all about it. Here comes Sir Brilliant: ask his advice, ma'am. 489

Mrs. Love. His advice?—Ask advice of the man, who has estranged Mr. Lovemore's affections from me?

Mus. Well, I protest and vow, I think Sir Brilliant a very pretty gentleman. He is the very pink of the fashion. He dresses fashionably, lives fashionably, wins your money fashionably, loses his own fashionably, and does every thing fashionably; and then he looks so lively, and so much to say, and so never at a loss!—But here he comes. 497

Enter Sir BRILLIANT.

Sir Bril. Mrs. Lovemore, my dear ma'am, always in a *vis-a-vis* party with your *sui-vante*?—Afford me your pardon, if I say this does a little wear the appearance of being out of humour with the world.

Mrs. Love. Far from it, Sir Brilliant. We were engaged in your panegyric.

Sir Bril. My panegyric? Then am I come most apropos, to give the portrait a few finishing touches. Mr. Lovemore, as soon as he is dressed, will wait upon you: in the mean time, I can help you to some anecdotes, which will enable you to colour your canvas a little higher. 508

Mrs. Love. Among those anecdotes, I hope you will not omit the bright exploit of seducing Mr. Lovemore from all domestic happiness. [*She makes a sign to Muslin to go.*]

Sir Bril. I, madam?—Let me perish if ever—

Mrs. Love. Oh! sir, I can make my observations.

Sir Bril. May fortune eternally forsake me, and beauty frown on me, if I am conscious of any plot upon earth.

Mrs. Love. Don't assert too strongly, Sir Brilliant.

Sir Bril. May I never throw a winning cast—

Mrs. Love. It is in vain to deny it, sir. 518

Sir Bril. May I lose the next sweepstakes, if I have ever, in thought, word, or deed, been accessory to his infidelity.

I alienate the affections of Mr. Lovemore! Consider, madam, how would this tell in Westminster Hall? Sir Brilliant Fashion, what say you, guilty of this indictment or not guilty? Not guilty, poss. Thus issue is joined. You enter the court. But, my dear madam, veil those graces that adorn your person; abate the fire of those charms; so much beauty will corrupt the judges: give me a fair trial.

Mrs. Love. And thus you think to laugh it away.

Sir Bril. Nay, hear me out. You appear in court: you charge the whole upon me, without a syllable as to the how, when, and where: no proof positive; the prosecution ends, and I begin my defence.

532

Mrs. Love. And by playing these false colours, you think I am to be amused?

Sir Bril. Nay, Mrs. Lovemore, I am now upon my defence. Only hear.—You will please to consider, Gentlemen of the Jury, that Mr. Lovemore is not a minor, nor I his guardian. He loves gaiety, pleasure, and enjoyment: is it my fault? He is possessed of talents and a taste for pleasure, which he knows how to gratify: can I restrain him? He knows the world, makes the most of life, and plucks the fruit that grows around him: am I to blame? This is the whole affair.—How say you, Gentlemen of the Jury?—Not guilty. There, you see how it is. I have cleared myself.

545

Mrs. Love. Brisk, lively, and like yourself, Sir Brilliant! But if you can imagine this bantering way——

Sir Bril. Acquitted by my country, ma'am; fairly acquitted.

Mrs. Love. After the very edifying counsel which you give to Mr. Lovemore, this loose strain is not in the least surprising. And, sir, your late project——

Sir Bril. My late project!

Mrs. Love. Your late project, sir. Not content with leading Mr. Lovemore into a thousand scenes of dissipation, you have introduced him lately to your mistress Bellmour. You understand me, sir.

Sir Bril. Ma'am, he does not so much as know the Widow Bellmour. 559

Mrs. Love. Nay, Sir Brilliant, have a care: justify it if you can, or give it a turn of wit. There is no occasion to hazard yourself too far.

Sir Bril. Falsehood I disdain, madam, and I, Sir Brilliant Fashion, declare that Mr. Lovemore is not acquainted with the Widow Bellmour. And if he was, what then? Do you know the lady?

Mrs. Love. I know her, sir? A person of that character?

Sir Bril. Oh!—I see you don't know her; but I will let you into her history.—Pray be seated—you shall know her whole history, and then judge for yourself. The Widow Bellmour, madam— 571

Love. [*Within.*] William, are the horses put to?

Sir Bril. We are interrupted.

Enter LOVEMORE.

Love. Very well: let the carriage be brought round directly.—How do you do, my dear?—Sir Brilliant, I beg your pardon.—My love, you don't answer me: how do you do this morning? [*With an air of cold civility.*]

Mrs. Love. A little indisposed in mind: but indisposition of the mind is of no consequence: nobody pities it.

Love. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Lovemore. Indisposition of the mind—Sir Brilliant, that's a mighty pretty ring on your finger. 581

Sir Bril. A bauble: will you look at it? [*Gives the ring.*]

Mrs. Love. Though I have but few obligations to Sir

Brilliant, I suppose I am to ascribe to him the favour of this visit, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. [*Looking at the ring and laughing.*] Now there you wrong me.—Your inquiries about my health have been very obliging this morning, and I came to return the compliment before I got out.—It is set very neatly. [*Gives back the ring.*

Mrs. Love. Are you going out, sir? 590

Love. A matter of business—How I do hate business!—But business, [*Examining his ruffles.*]—business must be done.—Pray is there any news?—Any news, my dear?

Mrs. Love. It would be news to me, sir, if you would be kind enough to let me know whether I may expect the favour of your company at dinner to-day.

Love. It would be impertinent in me to answer such a question, for I can give no direct answer to it.—I am the slave of events; just as things happen; perhaps I may; perhaps not. But don't let me be of any inconvenience to you. Is it material where a body eats?—Have you heard what happened to me? [*Aside to Sir Brilliant.*

Sir Bril. When and where? 603

Love. A word in your ear—with your permission, ma'am?

Mrs. Love. That cold, contemptuous civility, Mr. Lovemore—

Love. Po! pr'ythee now how can you?—that is very peevish, and very ill-natured. [*Turning to Sir Brilliant.*] I lost every thing I played for after you went. The foreigner and he understand one another.—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Lovemore: it was only about an affair at the opera. 611

Mrs. Love. The opera, or any thing, is more agreeable than my company.

Love. Now there again you wrong me. [*To Sir Brilliant.*] We dine at the St. Alban's.—How can you, Mrs. Lovemore? I make it a point not to incommode you. You possibly may

have some private party; and it would be unpolite in me to obstruct your schemes of pleasure. Would not it, Sir Brilliant?

Sir Bril. Oh!—Gothic to the last degree! 620

Love. Very true; vulgar and mechanic! [*Both stand laughing.*]

Mrs. Love. Go on; make sport for yourselves, gentlemen.

Love. Ho! ho! ho! I am sore with laughing. If you, madam, have arranged an agreeable party, for me to be present, it would look as if we lived together like Sir Bashful Constant and his lady; who are always, like two game-cocks, ready armed to goad and spur one another. Hey! Sir Brilliant?

Sir Bril. Oh! the very thing: or like Sir Theodore Traffic at Tunbridge taking his wife under the arm in the public rooms, and ‘come along home, I tell you.’ 631

Love. Exactly so. [*Both continue laughing.*] Odds my life! I shall be beyond my time. [*Looks at his watch.*] Any commands into the city, my dear?

Mrs. Love. Commands!—no, sir, I have no commands.

Love. I have an appointment at my banker’s, Sir Brilliant, you know old Discount?

Sir Bril. He that was in Parliament, and had the large contract?

Love. The same: *Entire Butt*, I think, was the name of his borough. Can I set you down? 641

Sir Bril. No, my carriage waits. I shall rattle half the town over presently.

Love. As you will. Sir Brilliant will entertain you, ma’am. *Au revoir*, my love.—Sir Brilliant, yours—Who waits there?

[*Exit singing.*]

Sir Bril. Bon voyage.—You see, madam, that I don’t deprive you of his company.

Mrs. Love. Your influence is now unnecessary. It is

grown habitual to him : he will drive to your Mrs. Bellmour, I suppose. 650

Sir Bril. Apropos ; that brings us back to the little history I was going to give you of that lady. What is your charge against her ? That she is amiable ? Granted. Young, gay, rich, handsome, with enchanting talents, it is no wonder all the pretty fellows are on their knees to her. Her manner so entertaining ! that quickness of transition from one thing to another ! that round of variety ! and every new attitude does so become her ; and she has such a feeling heart, and with an air of giddiness so nice a conduct ! 659

Mrs. Love. Mighty well, sir ; she is a very vestal. Finish your portrait. A vestal from your school of painting must be a curiosity.—But how comes it, sir, if she is this wonder, that your honourable proposals are at an end there ?

Sir Bril. Compulsion, ma'am : it is not voluntary. My Lord Etheridge is the happy man. I thought he was out of the kingdom ; but his lordship is with her every evening. I can scarce gain admittance ; and so all that remains for me, is to do justice to the lady, and console myself in the best way I can for the insufficiency of my pretensions.

Mrs. Love. Am I to believe all this ? 670

Sir Bril. May the first woman I pay my addresses to strike me to the centre with a supercilious eyebrow, if every syllable is not minutely true.—So that, you see, I am not the cause of your inquietude.—There is not in the world a person who more earnestly aspires to prove the tender esteem he bears you.—I have long panted for an opportunity—By all that's soft she listens to me ! [*Aside.*]—I have long panted, ma'am, for a tender moment like this—

Mrs. Love. [*Looking gravely at him.*] Sir !

Sir Bril. I have panted with all the ardour, which charms like yours must kindle in every heart !— 681

Mrs. Love. [*Walks away.*] This liberty, sir—

Sir Bril. Consider, madam; we have both cause of discontent; both disappointed; both crossed in love; and the least we can do is both to join, and sweeten each other's cares.

Mrs. Love. And your friend, sir, who has just left you—

Sir Bril. He, madam, for a long time—I have seen it, with vexation seen it—yes, he has long been false to honour, love, and you. 690

Mrs. Love. Sir Brilliant, I have done. You take my wrongs too much to heart, sir. [*Rings a bell.*]

“*Sir Bril.* Those eyes, that tell us what the sun is made of, those hills of driven snow!”

Mrs. Love. Will nobody answer there?

Enter MUSLIN.

Sir Bril. Madam, I desist: when you are in better humour, recollect what I have said. Your adorer takes his leave. Sir Brilliant, mind your hits, and her strait-laced virtue will surrender at last. Madam—— 699

[*Bows respectfully: Exit.*]

Mus. As I live and breathe, ma'am, if I was as you, I would not fluster myself about it.

Mrs. Love. About what?

Mus. What signifies mincing the matter? I heard it all.

Mrs. Love. You did? did you? [*Looks angrily.*]

Mus. Ma'am?

Mrs. Love. Impertinence! [*Walks about.*] Oh! Mr. Love-more!—To make his character public, and render him the topic of every tea-table throughout this town! I must avoid that. 709

Mus. What the deuce is here to do?—An unmannerly thing, for to go for to huff me in this manner! [*Aside.*]

Mrs. Love. That would only widen the breach, and, in-

stead of neglect, might call forth resentment, and settle at last into a fixed aversion : lawyers, parting, and separate maintenance !——What must be done ?

Mus. What is she thinking of now ?——A sulky thing, not to be more familiar with such a friend as I am.——Did you speak to me, ma'am ? 718

Mrs. Love. It may succeed ; suppose I try it, Muslin.

Mus. Ma'am.

[*Running to her.*

Mrs. Love. You heard Sir Brilliant say, that Mr. Love-more is not acquainted with the widow ?

Mus. Lard, ma'am, he's as full of tricks as a French milliner. I know he does visit there : I know it from William. I'll be hanged in my own garters if he does not.

Mrs. Love. I know not what to do. Let my chair be got ready.

Mus. Your chair, ma'am !——Are you going out ? 728

Mrs. Love. Let me hear no more questions : do as I order you. [Exit.

Mus. Which way is the wind now ? No matter ; she does not know what she'd be at. If she would but take my advice——go abroad, visit every where, see the world, throw open her doors, give balls, assemblies, concerts ; sing, dance, dress, spend all her money, run in debt, ruin her husband ; there would be some sense in that : the man would stay at home then to quarrel with her. She would have enough of his company. But, no ; mope, mope for ever ; heigh-ho ! tease, tease, Muslin step to William ; where's his master ? When did he come home ? How long has he been up ? A fine life truly.—I love to be in the fashion, for my part.—Bless me, I had like to have forgot. Mrs. Marmalet comes to my rout to-night. She might as well stay away : she is nothing but mere lumber. The formal thing won't play higher than shilling whist. How the devil does she think I

can make a shilling party for her? There is no such a thing now-a-days: nobody plays shilling whist now, unless I was to invite the trades-people: but I shan't let myself down for Madam Marmalet, that I promise her. [Exit.

ACT II. SCENE I.

An Apartment at Sir BASHFUL CONSTANT'S. Enter Sir BASHFUL.

Sir Bashful.

DID not I hear a rap at the door? Yes, yes, I did; I am right. The carriage is just now driving away. Who answers there? Sideboard; step hither, Sideboard. I must know who it is: my wife keeps the best company in England. Hold, I must be wary. Servants love to pry into their master's secrets.

Enter SIDEBOARD.

Sir Bash. Whose carriage was that at the door?

Side. The Dutchess of Hurricane, your honour.

Sir Bash. The Dutchess of Hurricane? [*Walks aside and smiles.*] A woman of great rank!—what did she want? 10

Side. She has left this card for my lady.

Sir Bash. A card? Let me see it. [*Reads.*] *The Dutchess of Hurricane presents compliments to Lady Constant. She has left the bounds and the foxes, and the brutes that gallop after them, to their own dear society for the rest of the winter. Her Grace keeps Wednesdays at Hurricane House for the rest of the winter.*—Make me thankful, here's a card from a Dutchess!—what have you there?

Side. A parcel of cards, that have been left here this morning. 20

Sir Bash. All these in one morning? [*Looks at them.*] Why I may as well keep an inn; may as well keep the Coach and Horses in Piccadilly. [*Reads fast.*] *Lady Riot—Mrs. Allnight—The Dutchess of Carmine—*look ye there, another dutchess! *Lady Basset—Lord Pleurisie—the Countess of Ratifie—Sir Richard Lungs—Lord Laudanum—Sir Charles Valerian—Lady HeDick—Lady Mary Gabble—*I can't bear all this, Sideboard—[*Aside and smiling.*] I can't bear the pleasure of it: all people of tip-top condition to visit my wife!

Enter FURNISH.

Sir Bash. What's the matter, Furnish? 30

Fur. The matter, sir?—Nothing's the matter.

Sir Bash. What are you about? Where are you going? What have you to do now?

Fur. Only to tell the chairmen they must take Black George with his flambeau with them this evening, and carry the chair to pay visits for my lady.

Sir Bash. An empty chair to pay visits!—what polite ways people of fashion have got of being intimate with each other!—[*Aside.*] Absurd as it is, I am glad to see my wife keep pace with the best of them. I laugh at it, and yet I like it.—Wounds! I shall be found out by my servants. I tell you, Sideboard, and you, Mrs. Busy Body, that your mistress leads a life of noise and hurry, and cards and dice, and vanity and nonsense, and I am resolved to bear it no longer.—Don't I hear her coming? 45

Fur. My lady is coming, sir.

Sir Bash. [*Aside and smiling.*] She looks charmingly.—Now I'll tell her roundly a piece of my mind. You shall see who commands in this house.

Enter Lady CONSTANT.

Sir Bash. [*Steals a look.*] I could almost give up the point when I look at her.—So, madam, I have had my house full of duns again to-day. 52

Lady Cons. Obliging creatures, to call so often. What did they want?

Sir Bash. Want!—what should they want but money?

Lady Cons. And you paid them, I suppose?

Sir Bash. You suppose!—'Sdeath, madam, what do you take me for?

Lady Cons. I took you for a husband: my brother prescribed you. But his prescription has done me no good.

Sir Bash. Nor me either: I have had a bitter pill of it.

Lady Cons. But the pill was gilded for you. My fortune, I take it, has paid off the old family mortgage on your estate.

Sir Bash. And at the rate you go on, a new mortgage will swallow up my estate.—I see you are an ungrateful woman.

Lady Cons. That is, as you keep the account. 66

Sir Bash. And my accounts will shew it. Day after day nothing but extravagance to gratify your vanity. Did not I go into parliament to please you? Did not I go down to the Borough of Smoke-and-Sot, and get drunk there for a whole month together? Did not I get mobbed at the George and Vulture? and pelted and horsewhipped the day before the election? And was not I obliged to steal out of the town in a rabbit-cart? And all this to be somebody, as you call it? Did not I stand up in the House to make a speech, to shew what an orator you had married? And did not I expose myself? Did I know whether I stood upon my head or my heels for half an hour together? And did not a great man from the Treasury-bench tell me never to speak again?

Lady Cons. And why not take his advice? 80

Sir Bash. What in the name of common sense had I to do in Parliament? My country! what's my country to me? The debts of the nation, and your gaming debts, are nothing to me. I must help to pay both, must I? I can vote against taxes, and I can advertise in the Gazette to secure me from your extravagance. I have not lived in the Temple for nothing.

Fur. He slept there, and calls it studying the law.

Sir Bash. Hold you your tongue, Mrs. Pert: leave the room. Go both about your business. 90

[*Exeunt* Furnish and Sideboard.

[*Aside.*] I have kept it up before my servants. [*Looks at Lady Constant.*] She is a fine woman, after all.

Lady Cons. Is there never to be an end of this usage, sir? Am I to be for ever made unhappy by your humours?

Sir Bash. Humours! good sense and sound judgment, in the fine lady's dictionary, are to be called humours?

Lady Cons. And your humours are now grown insupportable.

Sir Bash. Your profusion is insupportable. At the rate you go on, how am I to find money for my next election?—If you would but talk this matter over coolly—She talks like an angel, and I wish I could say [*Aside.*] the same of myself. —What will the world think?—Only command your temper—what will they think, if I am seen to encourage your way of life?

Lady Cons. Amuse yourself that way, sir.—Avoid one error, and run into the opposite extreme.

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] There; a translation from Horace! *Dum vitant stulti vitia*—She is a notable woman.

Lady Cons. Let me tell you, there is not in life a more ridiculous sight than the person who guards, with imaginary wisdom, against one giant-vice, and leaves himself open to a million of absurdities.

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] I am nothing to her in argument—she has a tongue that can reason me out of my senses.—I could almost find in my heart to tell her the whole truth.—You know, my Lady Constant, that when you want any thing in reason——

117

Lady Cons. Is it unreasonable to live with decency? Is it unreasonable to keep the company my rank and education have entitled me to? Is it unreasonable to conform to the modes of life, when your fortune can so well afford it?

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] She is a very reasonable woman, and I wish I had but half her sense.—You know I am good-natured in the main, and if a sum of money within a moderate compass—If a brace of hundreds—[*Aside.*] why should not I make it three?—I know that you have contracted habits of life, and [*In a softened tone.*] habit, I know, is not easily conquered: and if three [*Smiling.*] hundred pounds will prevent disputes, why [*Smiling.*] as to the matter of three hundred pound——

130

Enter FURNISH, with a Band-box.

Fur. Your ladyship's things from the milliner's.

Sir Bash. Death and fury! this woman has overheard me. Three hundred pounds, madam! [*In a violent passion.*] let me tell you that three hundred pounds—what right have you to shovel away three hundred pounds?

Lady Cons. Why does the man fly out into such a passion?

Sir Bash. I will allow no such doings in my house. Don't I often come when my hall is besieged with a parcel of powder-monkey servants? And did not I the other day, before I could get into my own doors, entangle myself among the chairmen's poles? and was not I confined there like a man in the stocks?

Lady Cons. Why would you be so awkward?

143

Sir Bash. An eternal scene of routs and drums. Have not I seen you put the fee simple of a score of my best acres upon a single card? And have not I muttered to myself, 'if that woman was as much in love with me as she is with Pam, what an excellent wife she would make?'

Lady Cons. Pam is very obliging: why won't you strive to be as agreeable? 150

Sir Bash. 'Sdeath, madam, you are so fond of play, that I should not wonder to see my next child marked on the forehead with a pair royal of aces.

Fur. I am sure you deserve to be marked on the forehead with a pair of—

Sir Bash. Malapert hussey! do you meddle? Begone this moment. [Exit Furnish.

Lady Cons. Fy upon it, Sir Bashful! I am tired of blushing for you.

Sir Bash. I am afraid I have gone too far: she is ashamed of me. [Aside.

Lady Cons. You agreed to a separation the other day, and there remains nothing but to execute articles, and make an end of all this disquiet. 164

Sir Bash. A separate maintenance will go but a little way to answer the bawling of milliners, mercers, jewellers, and gaming debts.

Lady Cons. It will purchase content, and nothing can obtain that under your roof.

Sir Bash. [Aside.] I have shot my bolt too far—I fancy, my Lady Constant, that you don't know me. We might explain matters, and—'sdeath! [Aside.] I am going to blab—I say, madam, if you understood me rightly—as to the authority of a husband, I might, perhaps, be brought to give it up, in part at least; and if nobody was the wiser, I might connive—Po! confusion! interrupted again by that—

Enter FURNISH.

Fur. A servant from Mrs. Lovemore, madam, to know—

Sir Bash. The authority of a husband I never will give up.— 179

Lady Cons. A storm, a whirlwind is fitter to converse with.

Sir Bash. I will storm like a whirlwind in my own house. I have done, madam; you are an ungovernable woman—
[*Aside and smiling.*] She is a charming woman; and if nobody saw it, I would let her govern me with all my heart. [*Exit.*

Lady Cons. Did any body ever see such behaviour?

Fur. Never; and how your ladyship bears it, I can't tell.

Lady Cons. That it should be my fate to be married to such a quicksand! What does Mrs. Lovemore say?

Fur. If your ladyship will be at home, she intends to do herself the pleasure of waiting upon you, madam. 190

Lady Cons. Very well; I shall be at home. Upon recollection, I want to see her. Let the servant wait: I'll write an answer. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

Another Apartment. Enter Sir BASHFUL and LOVEMORE.

Sir Bash. Walk in, Mr. Lovemore, walk in. I am heartily glad to see you. This is kind.

Love. I am ready, you see, to attend the call of friendship.

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, you are a friend indeed.

Love. You do me honour, Sir Bashful. And your lady, how does she do? 200

Sir Bash. Perfectly well: in great spirits. [*Smiling at Lovemore.*] I never saw her look better: but we have had t'other skirmish since I saw you.

Love. Another?

Sir Bash. Ay, another; and I did not bate her an ace. She is a rare one to argue. She is fit to discuss a point with any man.—Nobody like her. Wit at will. I thought I managed the dispute, and that I should soon have had her at what you call a *non-plus*. But no, no; no such thing; she can give you a sharp turn in a moment. 210

Love. Ay!

Sir Bash. Give her her due, I am nothing to her. I thought I had her fast, but she went round me quick as lightning; and would you believe it? [*Looks highly pleased.*] she did not leave me a word to say.

Love. Well! that was hard upon you.

Sir Bash. No, not hard at all. Those little victories I don't mind. You know I told you I had something for your private ear. Have you observed nothing odd and singular in me? 220

Love. Not in the least. In the whole circle of my acquaintance I know nobody so little tinged with oddity.

Sir Bash. What, have you seen nothing? [*Laughs.*] Have you remarked nothing particular in regard to my wife?

Love. Why, you don't live happy with her: but that is not a singular case.

Sir Bash. But I tell you—this must be in confidence—I am, at the bottom, a very odd fellow.

Love. You do yourself injustice, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. No, not in the least. It is too true—I am in the main a very odd fellow; I am indeed; as odd a fish as lives; and you must have seen it before now.

Love. I see it!—I am not apt to spy defects in my friends. What can this be? You are not jealous, I hope? 234

Sir Bash. You have not hit the right nail on the head. No, not jealous. Do her justice, I am safe as to that

point. My lady has high notions of honour. No, it is not that.

Love. Not a ray of light to guide me : explain, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. [*Smiling at him.*] You could never have imagined it. But first let me shut this door. 241

Love. What whim has got possession of him now ?

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, I have great dependance upon you. I am going to make a discovery—I blush at the very thought of it. [*Turns away.*]

Love. Be a man, Sir Bashful ; out with it at once ; let me advise you.

Sir Bash. The very thing I want. The affair is—but then if he should betray me !—Mr. Lovemore, I doubt you, and yet esteem you. Some men there are, who, when a confidence is reposed in them, take occasion from thence to hold a hank over their friend, and tyrannize him all the rest of his days. 253

Love. O fy ! this is ungenerous. True friendship is of another quality : it feels from sympathy ; honour is the active principle ; and the strictest secrecy is an inviolable rule.

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, I have no further doubt—stay ; did not you hear a noise ? Don't I see a shadow moving under the bottom of that door ? [*Goes to the door.*]

Love. What has got into his head ?

Sir Bash. [*Looking out.*] Servants have a way of listening.

Love. Rank jealousy ! he has it through the very brain !

Sir Bash. No, no ; all's safe. Mr. Lovemore, I will make you the depositary, the faithful depositary of a secret : let it pass from the bottom of my heart to the inmost recess of yours : there let it rest concealed from every prying eye.—My inclination—There—I see a laugh already forming in every feature of your face. 268

Love. Then my face is no true index of the mind. Were

you to know the agitations in which you keep me by this suspense—

Sir Bash. I believe it. To make an end at once, my inclinations are totally changed—no, not changed, but they are not what they seemed to be. Love is the passion that possesses me—I am in love, and—[*Turns from him.*] and I am ashamed of myself. 276

Love. Ashamed! love is a noble passion: but don't let me hear any more about it. Lady Constant will discover all, and then the blame will fall on me. If your heart revolts from her, don't let me be thought in league with you. You need not involve me in a quarrel with her ladyship.

Sir Bash. You don't take me right. You are wide, quite wide of the mark. Hear me out.

Love. No, no more. You must excuse me.

Sir Bash. You shall hear me. The object of my passion, this charming woman, whom I dote on to distraction—

Love. Your pardon; I won't hear it—[*Walks away from him.*] When her ladyship hears of his gallantry, the devil is in the dice if the spirit of revenge does not mould her to my purposes. 290

Sir. Bash. [*Following Lovemore.*] I say, Mr. Lovemore, this adorable creature—

Love. Keep your secret, Sir Bashful. [*Avoiding him.*]

Sir Bash. [*Following him.*] Who looks so lovely in my eyes—

Love. Well; I don't desire to know her.

Sir Bash. You do know her. [*Following him.*] This idol of my heart is my own wife.

Love. [*Stares at him.*] Your own wife?

Sir Bash. Yes, my own wife. [*Looks silly, and turns away.*]
'Tis all over with me: I am undone. 301

Love. This is the most unexpected discovery.

Sir Bash. Look ye there now ; he laughs at me already.

Love. [*Aside.*] His wife must not know this. The grass is cut under my feet if ever she hears a word of it.

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] He is struck with amazement, and does not say a word to me.

Love. [*Aside.*] I must not encourage him.—And can this be possible, Sir Bashful?—In love with your own wife?

Sir Bash. Spare my confusion. I have made myself very ridiculous. [*Looks at him and turns away.*] I know I have.

Love. Ridiculous! Far from it. Can it be wrong to love a valuable woman? Not to feel the impressions of beauty and of merit were downright insensibility; but then we should always admire with discretion. The folly of us married men consists in letting our wives perceive the vehemence with which we love; and the consequence is, we are enslaved for the rest of our lives.—I could trust you with a secret, which, perhaps, would keep you in countenance. Could you imagine it? I love my wife. 320

Sir Bash. How?

Love. I am in love with my wife.

Sir Bash. Oh! no, no;—hey! [*Looking highly pleased.*] you make me laugh. You don't love her, do you?

Love. Passionately, tenderly; with all the ardour of affection.

Sir Bash. Give me your hand. Ha, ha!—I did not expect this. This is some relief. Ha, ha!—you have made me happy. And have you led the life you have done all this time, on purpose to conceal your regard from her? 330

Love. For that very purpose. I esteem her; I love her; but I would not have her know it.

Sir Bash. No!

Love. Upon no consideration; nor would I have the world know it.

Sir Bash. Perfectly right.

Love. To be sure. Tell your wife that you esteem her good qualities, and admire her person, she cries *victoria*, falls to plundering, and then you must either break her chain, or wear it in the face of the world, a laughing-stock for all your acquaintance.

341

Sir Bash. That is what I have always been afraid of.

Love. Not without reason. The world delights in ridicule. Do you know, if our secrets were to transpire, that we should have nothing but wit, and raillery, and fleers, and and taunts flying about our ears?

Sir Bash. But I have taken good care. I have quarrelled with my lady ten times a day on purpose to cloak the affair, and prevent all suspicion.

349

Love. Admirable! I commend your prudence. Besides—my Lady Constant, you know, has some youthful vigour about her; a graceful person, and an eye that inflames desire; and desire, at your time of life, you know—

Sir Bash. Po! it is not for that; that is nothing. I wear admirably well, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. Do you?

Sir Bash. As young as ever; but I don't let her know it.

Love. Well! if you are discreet in that point, you are a very Machiavel!

359

Sir Bash. Yes, yes; I fight cunning.

[Laughs.]

Love. Let nothing betray you. Be upon your guard: that is my own plan exactly. You want no advice from me.

Sir Bash. Pardon me: you can assist me.—My dear brother sufferer, give me your hand. We can in a sly way be of great use to each other.

Love. As how?

Sir Bash. I'll tell you. There are some things which you know our wives expect to be done.

Love. So there are——[*Aside.*] What the devil is he at now? 370

Sir Bash. Now, if you will assist me——

Love. You may depend upon my assistance.

Sir Bash. Thus it is: my wife, you know, keeps a power of company, and makes a great figure there. I could shew her in any company in England: I wish she could say the same of me.

Love. Why truly I wish she could.

Sir Bash. But that's out of the question. Now, if you will come into my scheme—It must be a deep secret—How? Is that Sir Brilliant's voice? 380

Enter Sir BRILLIANT.

Sir Bril. Sir Bashful, you see what attraction you have. Lovemore, I did not expect to see you here.

Love. Nor did I expect you, Sir Brilliant. [*Aside.*

Sir Bash. Confusion!—This unseasonable visit— [*Aside.*

Sir Bril. And your lady, is she at home, Sir Bashful?

Sir Bash. Her own people keep that account, sir: I know nothing of her.

Sir Bril. Nay, never talk slightly of a lady who possesses so many elegant accomplishments. She has spirit, sense, wit, and beauty. 390

Sir Bash. Spirit, sense, wit, and beauty! she has them all, sure enough.—Sir, I am no sworn appraiser, to take an inventory of her effects.—[*Aside.*] Hey, Lovemore!

[*Looks at him, and laughs.*

Love. [*To Sir Bash.*] Vastly well.

Sir Bril. Is her ladyship visible this morning?

Sir Bash. Whether she is visible, or not, is no business of mine, but I know she is unintelligible this morning, and incomprehensible this morning. She has the vapours; but

your conversation, I suppose, will brighten her up for the rest of the day. 400

Sir Bril. Why, as it happens, I have the rarest piece of news to communicate to her. Lovemore, you know Sir Amorous la Fool?

Love. He that was Sheriff the other day? Came up with an address, and got himself knighted?

Sir Bril. The same. He declared he would live with his friends upon the same familiar footing as before, and his new dignities should make no alteration.

Sir Bash. I have seen the knight. What of him?

Sir Bril. Poor devil. He is in such a scrape! 410

Sir Bash. What's the matter? Bubbled at play, I suppose.

Sir Bril. Worse, much worse.

Love. Has he been blackballed at one of the clubs?

Sir Bash. Or run through the body in a duel?

Sir Bril. Why that's a scrape indeed: but it is not that.

Sir Bash. What then?

Sir Bril. So unfortunate a discovery; he is fallen in love—I cannot help laughing at him.

Love. Po! fallen in love with some coquette, who plays off her airs, and makes a jest of him. 420

Sir Bash. A young actress, it may be, or an opera singer?

Sir Bril. No, you will never guess. Sir Bashful—like a silly devil, he is fallen in love with his own wife.

Sir Bash. Fallen in love with his own wife! [*Stares at him.*]

Sir Bril. Yes; he has made up all quarrels; his jealousy is at an end, and he is to be upon his good behaviour for the rest of his life.—Could you expect this, Lovemore?

Love. No, sir; neither I nor my friend, Sir Bashful, expected this. 429

Sir Bash. It is a stroke of surprise to me. [*Looking uneasy.*]

Sir Bril. I heard it at my Lady Betty Scandal's, and we

had such a laugh: the whole company were in astonishment: whist stood still, quadrille laid down the cards, and brag was in suspense. Poor Sir Amorous! it is very ridiculous, is not it, Sir Bashful?

Sir Bash. Very ridiculous indeed.—[*Aside.*] My own case exactly, and my friend Lovemore's too.

Sir Bril. The man is lost, undone, ruined, dead and buried.

Love. [*Laughing.*] He will never be able to shew his face after this discovery. 441

Sir Bril. Oh, never; 'tis all over with him. Sir Bashful, this does not divert you; you don't enjoy it.

Sir Bash. Who, I?—I—I—nothing can be more pleasant, and—I—laugh as heartily as I possibly can.

[*Forcing a laugh.*]

Sir Bril. Lovemore, you remember Sir Amorous used to strut, and talk big, and truly he did not care a pinch of snuff for his wife, not he; pretended to be as much at ease as Sir Bashful about his lady, and as much his own master as you yourself, or any man of pleasure about town. 450

Love. I remember him: but as to Sir Bashful and myself, we know the world; we understand life.

Sir Bash. So we do; the world will never have such a story of us. Will they, Lovemore?

Love. Oh! we are free: we are out of the scrape.

Sir Bril. Sir Amorous la Fool will be a proverb. Adieu for him the side-box whisper, the soft assignation, and all the joys of freedom. He is retired with his Penelope to love one another in the country; and next winter they will come to town to hate one another. 460

Sir Bash. Do you think it will end so?

Sir Bril. No doubt of it. That is always the *denouement* of modern matrimony. But I have not told you the worst

of his case. Our friend, Sir Charles Wildfire, you know, was writing a comedy, and what do you think he has done? He has drawn the character of Sir Amorous, and made him the hero of the play.

Sir Bash. What, put him into a comedy?

Sir Bril. Even so: it is called 'The Amorous Husband; or, The Man in Love with his own Wife.' Oh! oh! oh! oh!

471

Love. We must send in time for places.

[*Laughs with Sir Brilliant.*

Sir Bash. Lovemore carries it with an air. [*Aside.*

Sir Bril. Yes, we must secure places. Sir Bashful, you shall be of the party.

Sir Bash. The party will be very agreeable. I shall enjoy the joke prodigiously. Ha! ha! [*Forces a laugh.*

Love. Yes, Sir Bashful, we shall relish the humour.

[*Looks at him, and laughs.*

Sir Bril. The play will have a run: the people of fashion will crowd after such a character.—I must drive to a million of places and put it about; but first, with your leave, Sir Bashful, I will take the liberty to give a hint of the affair to your lady. It will appear so ridiculous to her.

483

Sir Bash. Do you think it will?

Sir Bril. Without doubt: she has never met with any thing like it: has she, Lovemore?

Love. I fancy not: Sir Bashful, you take care of that.

Sir Bash. Yes, yes; I shall never be the town talk.—Hey, Lovemore!

Sir Bril. Well, I'll step and pay my respects to my Lady Constant. Poor Sir Amorous! he will have his horns added to his coat of arms in a little time. Ha! ha!

[*Exit.*

Sir Bash. There, you see how it is. I shall get lampooned, be-rhymed, and nighed into a comedy.

494

Love. Po! never be frightened at this. Nobody knows of your weakness but myself, and I can't betray your secret for my own sake.

Sir Bash. Very true.

498

Love. This discovery shews the necessity of concealing our loves. We must act with caution. Give my lady no reason to suspect that you have the least regard for her.

Sir Bash. Not for the world.

Love. Keep to that.

Sir Bash. I have done her a thousand kindnesses, but all by stealth; all in a sly way.

Love. Have you?

506

Sir Bash. Oh! a multitude. I'll tell you. She has been plaguing me a long time for an addition to her jewels. She wants a diamond cross, and a better pair of diamond buckles. Madam, says I, I will have no such trumpery; but then goes I and bespeaks them of the first jeweller in town. All under the rose. The buckles are finished: worth five hundred! She will have them this very day, without knowing from what quarter they come—I can't but laugh at the contrivance—The man that brings them will run away directly, without saying a word. [*Laughs heartily.*]

Love. Sly, sly.—You know what you are about.

Sir Bash. Ay, let me alone—[*Laughs with Lovemore.*]—And then, to cover the design still more, when I see her wear her baubles, I can take occasion to be as jealous as bedlam.

521

Love. So you can: ha! ha!—[*Aside.*] I wish he may never be jealous of me in good earnest.

Sir Bash. Give me your hand. [*Looks at him, and laughs.*] I am safe, I think.

Love. [*Laughing with him.*] Perfectly safe—[*Aside.*] if it was not for his own folly.

Sir Bash. But I was telling you, Mr. Lovemore;—we can be of essential use to each other.

Love. As how, pray?

530

Sir Bash. Why, my lady is often in want of money. It would be ridiculous in me to supply her. Now, if you will take the money from me, and pretend to lend it to her, out of friendship, you know——

Love. Nothing can be better——[*Aside.*] Here is a fellow pimping for his own horns.—I shall be glad to serve you.

Sir Bash. I am for ever obliged to you—here, here; take it now——here it is in bank-notes—one, two, three; there is three hundred——give her that, and tell her you have more at her service to-morrow or next day, if her occasions require it.

541

Love. My good friend, to oblige you. [*Takes the money.*] This is the rarest adventure!

Sir Bash. I'll do any thing for you in return.

Love. I shall have occasion for your friendship——that is, to forgive me, if you find me out. [*Aside.*]

Sir Bash. Lose no time; step to her now——Hold, hold; Sir Brilliant is with her.

Love. I can dismiss him. Rely upon my friendship: I will make her ladyship easy for you.

550

Sir Bash. It will be kind of you.

Love. It shall be her own fault if I don't.

Sir Bash. A thousand thanks to you——Well, is not this the rarest project?

Love. It is the newest way—of satisfying a man's wife!

Sir Bash. Ay! let this head of mine alone.

Love. [*Aside.*] Not if I can help it. Hush!—I hear Sir Brilliant; he is coming down stairs. I'll take this opportunity, and step to her ladyship now.

Sir Bash. Do so, do so,

560

Love. I am gone. [*Aside.*] Who can blame me now if I cuckold this fellow? [*Exit.*

Sir Bash. Prosper you, prosper you, Mr. Lovemore.—
Make me thankful; he is a true friend. I don't know what I should do without him.

Enter Sir BRILLIANT.

Sir Bril. Sir Bashful, how have you managed this?

Sir Bash. I have no art, no management. What's the matter?

Sir Bril. I don't know what you have done, but your lady laughs till she is ready to expire at what I have been telling her. 571

Sir Bash. And she thinks Sir Amorous la Fool an object of ridicule?

Sir Bril. She does not give credit to a single syllable of the story. A man that loves his wife would be a Phoenix indeed! Such a thing might exist formerly, but in this polished age is no where to be found. That's her opinion of the matter.

Sir Bash. [*Laughs.*] A whimsical notion of hers! and so she thinks you may go about with a lanthorn to find a man that sets any value upon his wife? 581

Sir Bril. You have managed to convince her of it. How the devil do you contrive to govern so fine a woman? I know several, without her pretensions, who have long ago thrown off all restraint. You keep up your dignity.

Sir Bash. Yes, I know what I am about.

Sir Bril. You!—you are quite in the fashion.—Apropos; I fancy I shall want you to afford me your assistance. You know my Lady Charlotte Modelove? She has a taste for the theatre: at Bell-Grove Place she has an elegant stage, where her select friends amuse themselves now and then with a representation of certain comic pieces. We shall there act the

new comedy, but we apprehend some difficulty in the arrangement of the several characters. Now you shall act Sir Amorous, and——

595

Sir Bash. I act, sir!—I know nothing of the character.

Sir Bril. Po! say nothing of that. In time you may reach the ridiculous absurdity of it, and play it as well as another.

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] Confusion! he does not suspect, I hope—divert yourselves, sir, as you may; but not at my expence, I promise you.

Sir Bril. Never be so abrupt. Who knows but Lady Constant may be the happy wife, the *Cara Sposa* of the piece! and then, you in love with her, and she laughing at you for it, will give a zest to the humour, which every body will relish in the most exquisite degree.

606

Sir Bash. Po! this is too much. You are very pleasant, but you won't easily get me to play the fool.

Sir Bril. Well, consider of it. I shall be delighted to see my friend Sir Bashful tied to his wife's apron-string, and with a languishing look melting away in admiration of her charms. Oh, ho, ho, ho!—adieu; *a l'honneur*; good morning, Sir Bashful.

[*Exit.*]

Sir Bash. I don't know what to make of all this. But there is no danger. As long as nobody knows it, I may venture to love my wife. There will be no harm, while the secret is kept close as night, concealed in tenfold darkness, from the wits and scoffers of the age.

618

Enter LOVEMORE.

Sir Bash. Well, well;—how? what have you done?

Love. As I could wish: she is infinitely obliged to me, and will never forget the civility.

Sir Bash. A thousand thanks to you. I am not suspected?

Love. She has not a distant idea of you in this business.

She was rather delicate at first, and hesitated, and thought it an indecorum to accept of money even from a friend. But that objection soon vanished. I told her, it is but too visible that she is unfortunately yoked with a husband, whose humour will never be softened down to the least compliance with her inclinations.

Sir Bash. That was well said, and had a good effect, I hope. 631

Love. I hope so too.

Sir Bash. It helps to carry on the plot, you know.

Love. Admirably: it puts things in the train I wish.

Sir Bash. And so, to cover the design, you gave me the worst of characters?

Love. I painted you in terrible colours.

Sir Bash. Do so always, and she will never suspect me of being privy to any civility you may shew her.

Love. I would not have you know any thing of my civility to her for the world. [*Aside.*] I have succeeded thus far. I talked a few musty sentences, such as the person who receives a civility confers the obligation, with more jargon to that purpose, and so with some reluctance she complied at last, and things are now upon the footing I would have them.—Death and fury! there comes my wife. 646

Sir Bash. Ay, and here comes my wife.

Love. What the devil brings her hither?

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] Now, now; now let me see how he will carry it before Mrs. Lovemore.—Walk in, madam! walk in, Mrs. Lovemore.

Enter Mrs. LOVEMORE, and Lady CONSTANT, at opposite doors.

Lady Cons. Mrs. Lovemore, to see you abroad is a novelty indeed.

Mrs. Love. As great, perhaps, as that of finding your ladyship at home. Mr. Lovemore, I did not expect to have the pleasure of meeting you, 656

Love. Then we are both agreeably surprised.

Sir Bash. Now mind how he behaves. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Love. I thought you were gone to your city-banker.

Love. And you find that you are mistaken. I have deferred it till the evening—[*Aside.*] 'Sdeath! to be teased in this manner!

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] No, no; he won't drop the mask. [*Looks at Lady Constant.*] She has touched the cash; I can see the bank-notes sparkling in her eyes.

Mrs. Love. If you don't go into the city till the evening, may I hope for your company at dinner, Mr. Lovemore?

Love. The question is entertaining; but as it was settled this morning I think it has lost the graces of novelty. 670

Sir Bash. He won't let her have the least suspicion of his regard. [*Aside.*

Lady Cons. I dare say Mr. Lovemore will dine at home, if it conduces to your happiness, ma'am; and Sir Bashful, I take it, will dine at home for the contrary reason.

Sir Bash. Madam, I will dine at home, or I will dine abroad, for what reason I please, and it is my pleasure to give no reason for either.—Lovemore!

[*Looks at him, and smiles.*

Love. [*Aside to Sir Bashful.*] Bravo!—What a blockhead it is! 680

Mrs. Love. As you have your chariot at the door, Mr. Lovemore, if you have no objection, I will send away my chair, and you may do me the honour of a place in your carriage.

Love. The honour will be very great to me, but—so many

places to call at.—If I had known this sooner——You had better keep your chair.

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] Cunning ! cunning ! he would not be seen in his chariot with her for the world. He has more discretion than I have. 690

Lady Cons. Mrs. Lovemore, since you have, at last, ventured to come abroad, I hope you will think it a change for the better. You are too domestic. I shall expect now to see you often : and apropos, I am to have a route to-morrow evening ; if you will do me the honour of your company——

Sir Bash. A route to-morrow evening ! you have a route every evening, I think. Learn of Mrs. Lovemore ; imitate her example, and don't let me have your hurricane months all the year round in my house.—Hip ! [*Aside.*] Lovemore, how do you like me ? 701

Love. [*Aside to Sir Bashful.*] You improve upon it every time. But I am loitering here as if I had nothing to do.—My Lady Constant, I have the honour to wish your ladyship a good morning. Sir Bashful, yours—madam——

[*Bows gravely to Mrs. Lovemore, hums a tune, and exit.*]

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] He knows how to play the game. I'll try what I can do. Mrs. Lovemore, I have the honour to wish you a good morning. Madam——

[*Bows gravely to Lady Constant, hums a tune, and exit.*]

Mrs. Love. Two such husbands ! 709

Lady Cons. As to my swain, I grant you : Mr. Lovemore is, at least, well-bred ; he has an understanding, and may, in time, reflect. Sir Bashful never qualifies himself with the smallest tincture of civility.

Mrs. Love. If civility can qualify the draught, I must allow Mr. Lovemore to have a skilful hand. But there is no end to his projects. Every day opens a new scene. Another

of his intrigues is come to light. I came to consult with your ladyship. I know you are acquainted with the Widow Bellmour.

Lady Cons. The Widow Bellmour! I know her perfectly well. 721

Mrs. Love. Not so well, perhaps, as you may imagine. She has thrown out the lure for my wild gallant, and in order to deceive me——

Lady Cons. My dear, you must be mistaken. Who tells you this?

Mrs. Love. Oh, I can trust to my intelligence. Sir Brilliant Fashion, by way of blind to me, has been this morning drawing so amiable a picture of the lady——

Lady Cons. Sir Brilliant's authority is not always the best, but in this point you may trust to him. 731

Mrs. Love. But when you have heard all the circumstances——

Lady Cons. Depend upon it, you are wrong. I know the Widow Bellmour. Her turn of character, and way of thinking——

Mrs. Love. Excuse me, madam. You decide without hearing me.

Lady Cons. All scandal, take my word for it. However, let me hear your story. We'll adjourn to my dressing-room, if you will; and I promise to confute all you can say.—I would have you know the Widow Bellmour: you will be in love with her.—My dear madam, have not you a tinge of jealousy?—Beware of that malady. If you see things through that medium, I shall give you up.

That jaundice of the mind, whose colours strike 746
On friend and foe, and paint them all alike. [Exeunt.]

ACT III. SCENE I.

An Apartment at the Widow BELLMOUR's: several Chairs, a Toilette, a Book-Case, and a Harpsichord, disposed up and down.

Mignonet. [*Putting things in order.*]

I DON'T well know what to make of this same Lord Etheridge. He is coming here again to-day, I suppose : all this neatness, and all this care must be for him.—Well, it does not signify : [*Arranging the chairs.*] there is a pleasure in obeying Madam Bellmour. She is a sweet lady, that's the truth of it.—'Twere a pity if any of these men, with their deceitful arts, should draw her into a snare.—But she knows them all. They must rise early who can outwit her. [*Settling the toilette.*]

Enter Mrs. BELLMOUR, reading.

*Oh! blest with temper, whose unclouded ray
Can make to-morrow cheerful as to-day;
She who can own a sister's charms, and bear
Sighs for a daughter with unwounded ear;
That never answers till a husband cools,
And if she rules him, never shews she rules.*

Sensible, elegant Pope !

*Charms by accepting, by submitting sways,
Yet has her humour most, when she obeys.*

[Seems to read on.

Mign. Lord love my mistress! always so charming, so gay,
and so happy! 19

Mrs. Bell. These exquisite characters of women ! they are a sort of painter's gallery, where one sees the portraits of

all one's acquaintance, and sometimes we see our own features too. Mignonet, put this book in its place.

Mign. Yes, ma'am; and there's your toilette looks as elegant as hands can make it. 25

Mrs. Bell. Does it? I think it does. You have some taste. Apropos, where is my new song?——Oh! here it is: I must make myself mistress of it. [*Plays upon the harpsichord, and sings a little.*] I believe I have conquered it. [*Rises, and goes to her toilette.*] This hair is always tormenting me, always in disorder: this lock must be for ever gadding out of its place. I must and will subdue it.—Do you know, Mignonet, that this is a pretty song? It was writ by my Lord Etheridge. My lord has a turn. [*Sings a little.*] I must be perfect before he comes. [*Hums the tune.*] Do you know that I think my lord is one of those men who may be endured? 37

Mign. Yes, ma'am, I know you think so.

Mrs. Bell. Do you?

Mign. And if I have any skill, ma'am, you are not without a little partiality for his lordship.

Mrs. Bell. Really? Then you think I like him, perhaps. Do you think I like him? I don't well know how that is. Like him! no, not absolutely: it is not decided: and yet I don't know, if I had a mind to humour myself, and to give way a little to inclination, there is something here in my heart that would be busy, I believe.—The man has a softness of manner, a turn of wit, and does not want sentiment. Can I call it sentiment? Yes, I think I may. He has sentiment; and then he knows the manners, the usage of the world, and he points out the ridicule of things with so much humour! 52

Mign. You'll be caught, ma'am, I see that.—To be sure, my lord has a quality-air, and can make himself agree-

able. But what of that? You know but very little of him. Is a man's character known in three or four weeks time? [*Mrs. Bellmour hums a tune.*] Do, my dear madam, mind what I say: I am at times very considerate. I make my remarks, and I see very plainly——Lord, ma'am, what am I doing? I am talking to you for your own good, and you are all in the air, and no more mind me, no, no more than if I was nothing at all. 62

Mrs. Bell. [*Continues humming a tune.*] You talk wonderfully well upon the subject; but as I know how the cards lie, and can play the best of the game; and as I have a song to amuse me, one is inclined to give musical nonsense the preference.

Mign. I assure you, ma'am, I am not one of those servants, that bargain for their mistress's inclinations: but you are going to take a leap in the dark. What does my Lord Etheridge mean, with his chair always brought into the hall, and the curtains close about his ears? Why does not he come like himself, and not care who sees him. There's some mystery at the bottom, I'll be sworn there is; and so you'll find at last.—Dear heart, ma'am, if you are determined not to listen, what signifies my living with you? At this rate, I am of no service to you. 77

Mrs. Bell. There;—I have conquered my song.—[*Runs to her glass.*] How do I look to-day? The eyes do well enough, I think.—And so, Mignonet, you imagine I shall play the fool, and marry my Lord Etheridge?

Mign. You have it through the very heart of you: I see that.

Mrs. Bell. Do you?—I don't know what to say to it. Poor Sir Brilliant Fashion! if I prefer his rival, what will become of him?—I won't think about it.

Enter POMPEY.

Mrs. Bell. What's the matter, Pompey?

Pom. A lady in a chair desires to know if your ladyship is at home?

Mrs. Bell. Has the lady no name? 90

Pom. Yes; I fancies she has, ma'am; but she did not tell it.

Mrs. Bell. How awkward!—well, shew the lady up stairs.

Mign. Had not you better receive her in the drawing-room, ma'am? I have not half done my business here.

Mrs. Bell. Oh! you have done very well. There will be less formality here. I dare say it is some intimate acquaintance, though that foolish boy does not recollect her name. Here she comes. I don't know her. 99

Enter Mrs. LOVEMORE.

Mrs. Love. [*Disconcerted.*] I beg pardon for this intrusion.

Mrs. Bell. Pray walk in, ma'am. Mignonet, reach a chair.
[*Mrs. Lovemore crosses the stage, and they salute each other with an air of distant civility.*]

Mrs. Love. I am afraid this visit from one who has not the honour of knowing you——

Mrs. Bell. Oh, make no apology, ma'am.—Mignonet, you may withdraw. [*Exit Mignonet.*]

Mrs. Love. It may appear extraordinary that a stranger thus intrudes upon you; but a particular circumstance determined me to take this liberty. I hope you will excuse the freedom. 109

Mrs. Bell. You do me honour, ma'am: pray no excuses. A particular circumstance, you say?

Mrs. Love. I shall appear, perhaps, very ridiculous, and, indeed, I am afraid I have done the most absurd thing! but a lady of your acquaintance—you know my Lady Constant, ma'am?

Mrs. Bell. Extremely well.

Mrs. Love. She has given you such an amiable character

for benevolence and a certain elegant way of thinking, entirely your own, that I flatter myself, if it is in your power, you will be generous enough to afford me your assistance.

Mrs. Bell. Lady Constant is very obliging. Make a trial of me, ma'am, and if I can be of any use—— 122

Mrs. Love. I fear I shall ask you a strange question :—are you acquainted with a gentleman of the name of Lovemore ?

Mrs. Bell. Lovemore ? No such name on my list.—Love-more ? No :—I recollect no such person. The circle of my acquaintance is small : I am almost a stranger in town.

Mrs. Love. That makes an end, ma'am. I beg your pardon. I have given you an unnecessary trouble. [*Going.*

Mrs. Bell. [*Aside.*] Mighty odd this ! her manner is interesting.—You have given me no trouble, but my curiosity is excited. [*Takes her by the hand.*] I beg you will keep your chair. Pray be seated.—What can this mean ? [*Aside.*] Will you be so good as to inform me who the gentleman is ?

Mrs. Love. The story will be uninteresting to you, and to me it is painful. My grievances——[*Puts her handkerchief to her eyes.*]

Mrs. Bell. [*Aside.*] Her grief affects me. [*Looks at her till she has recovered herself.*] I would not importune too much—

Mrs. Love. You have such an air of frankness and generosity, that I will open myself without reserve : I have the tenderest regard for Mr. Lovemore : I have been married to him these two years. I admired his understanding, his sensibility, and his spirit. My heart was his ; I loved him with unbounded passion. I thought the flame was mutual, and you may believe I was happy. But of late, there is such a revolution in his temper, I know not what to make of it. I am doomed to be unhappy.

Mrs. Bell. Perhaps not : you may still have much in your power. 150

Mrs. Love. My power is at an end. Instead of the looks of affection, and the expressions of tenderness with which he used to meet me, it is nothing now but cold, averted, superficial civility; while abroad he runs on in a wild career of pleasure, and to my deep affliction, has entirely attached himself to another object.

Mrs. Bell. And if I had known Mr. Lovemore, do you imagine that my advice or persuasion would avail you any thing?

Mrs. Love. I had such a fancy. [*Aside.*] What can I think of her?

160

Mrs. Bell. You are much mistaken. In these cases friends may interpose, but what can they do? They recommend a wife to the good will, the honour, and generosity of her husband. But when a woman, who should be esteemed and loved, is recommended as an object of compassion, she is humbled indeed: it is all over with her. A wife should recommend herself by the graces of her person, and the variety of her talents. Men will prove false, and if there is nothing in your complaint but mere gallantry on his side, I protest I do not see that your case is so very bad.

170

Mrs. Love. Can it be worse, ma'am?

Mrs. Bell. A great deal.—If his affections, instead of being alienated, had been extinguished, what would be the consequence?—A downright, sullen, habitual insensibility. From that lethargy of affection a man is not easily recalled. In all Love's bill of mortality there is not a more fatal disorder. But this is not the case with Mr. Lovemore: by your account he still has sentiment; and where there is sentiment, there is room to hope for an alteration. But where the heart has lost its feeling, you have the pain of finding yourself neglected; and for what? The man has grown stupid, and to the warm beams of wit and beauty, as impenetrable as an ice-house.

183

Mrs. Love. That is not my complaint. I have to do with one, who is too susceptible of impressions from every beautiful object that comes in his way.

Mrs. Bell. Why, so much the better. A new idea strikes his fancy. He is inconstant, but after wavering and fluttering, he may settle at last. 189

Mrs. Love. How light she makes of it!—she apologizes for him! [Aside.

Mrs. Bell. And, perhaps, the fault is on the woman's side——

Mrs. Love. The virtue of my conduct, madam——

Mrs. Bell. Oh! I would have laid my life you would be at that work. But virtue is not the question at present. I suppose virtue; that is always understood. The fault I mean, is the want of due attention to the art of pleasing. It is there that most women fail. In these times, virtue may be its own reward. Virtue alone cannot please the taste of the age. It is *la belle nature*, virtue embellished by the advantages of art, that men expect now-a-days. That is the whole affair: I would not make myself uneasy, ma'am. 204

Mrs. Love. Not uneasy, when his indifference does not diminish my regard for him! Not uneasy, when the man I dote upon no longer fixes his happiness at home!

Mrs. Bell. Give me leave to speak my mind freely. I have observed, when the fiend jealousy is roused, that women lay out a wonderful deal of anxiety and vexation to no account: when, perhaps, if the truth were known, they should be angry with themselves instead of their husbands.

Mrs. Love. Angry with myself, madam! Calumny can lay nothing to my charge.

Mrs. Bell. There again now! that is the folly of us all.

Mrs. Love. And after being married so long, and behaving all the time with such an equality! 217

Mrs. Bell. Ay, that equality is the rock so many split upon. The men will change. Excuse my freedom. They are so immersed in luxury, that they must have eternal variety in their happiness. 221

Mrs. Love. She justifies him!

[*Aside.*

Mrs. Bell. Your case may not be desperate: I would venture to lay a pot of coffee, that the person who now rivals you in your husband's affections, does it without your good qualities, and even without your beauty, by the mere force of agreeable talents, and some skill in the art of pleasing.

Mrs. Love. I am afraid that compliment——

Mrs. Bell. If I judge right you are entitled to it. Let me ask you: Do you know this formidable rival? 230

Mrs. Love. There, I own, I am puzzled.

Mrs. Bell. What sort of woman is she?

Mrs. Love. Formidable indeed! She has been described to me as one of charming and rare accomplishments.

Mrs. Bell. Never throw up the cards for all that. Take my advice, ma'am.—You seem to have qualities that may dispute your husband's heart with any body; but the exertion of those amiable qualities, I fear, may be suppressed. Excuse my frankness. You should counteract your rival by the very arts which she employs against you. I know a lady now in your very situation: and what does she do? She consumes herself with unceasing jealousy; whereas, if she would exert but half the pains she uses in teasing herself, to vie with the person who has won her husband from her; to vie with her, I say, in the art of pleasing—for there it is a woman's pride should be piqued—Would she do that, take my word for it, victory would declare in her favour.—You are not without attractions; give them their energy, and you conquer.

Mrs. Love. Do you think so, ma'am?

250

Mrs. Bell. Think so! I am sure of it. You must exert

yourself. It is the wife's business to bait the hook for her husband with variety. Virtue alone, by her own native charms, would do, if the men were perfect. But it is otherwise, and since vice can assume allurements, why should not truth and innocence have additional ornaments also?

Mrs. Love. I find Sir Brilliant told me truth. [Aside.

Mrs. Bell. Give me leave, ma'am: I have been married, and am a little in the secret. To win a heart is easy; to keep it is the difficulty. After the fatal words, 'for better, 'for worse,' women relax into indolence, and while they are guilty of no infidelity, they think every thing safe. But they are mistaken: a great deal is wanting; an address, a vivacity, a desire to please; the agreeable contrast; the sense that pleases, the folly that charms—A favourite poet, PRIOR, has expressed it with delicacy.

*Above the fix'd and settled rules
Of vice and virtue in the schools,
The better part should set before 'em
A grace, a manner, a decorum.*

270

Mrs. Love. But when the natural temper——

Mrs. Bell. Oh! the natural temper must be forced. Home must be made a place of pleasure to the husband. How is that to be done? That equality which you talk of, is a sameness that palls and wearies. A wife should throw infinite variety into her manner. She should, as it were, multiply herself, and be, as it were, sundry different women on different occasions. The tender, the affectionate, the witty, the silent, all in their turns, all shifting the scene, and she succeeding to herself as quick as lightning. And this I take to be the whole mystery; the way to keep a man.—But I beg your pardon. I go on too fast: you will think me the giddiest creature.

283

Mrs. Love. Quite the reverse, ma'am ; you are very obliging !——

Mrs. Bell. I have tired myself and you too.—But pray, may I now enquire, who was so kind as to intimate that I am acquainted with Mr. Lovemore ?

Mrs. Love. It was a mere mistake. I have given you a great deal of trouble. You will excuse my frankness : I had heard that his visits were frequent here. 291

Mrs. Bell. His visits frequent here ! My Lady Constant could not tell you so ?

Mrs. Love. She told me quite the contrary. She knows your amiable qualities, and does you justice.

Mrs. Bell. The accident is lucky ! it has procured me the honour of your acquaintance. And I suppose you imagined that I had robbed you of Mr. Lovemore's heart ?—Scandal will be buzzing about. I can laugh at every thing of that sort. [*A rap at the door.*] Oh ! heavens ! some troublesome visit.— [Rings a bell.

Enter MIGNIONET.

Mrs. Bell. I am not at home. Go, and give an answer.

Mign. It is Lord Etheridge, ma'am : he is coming up stairs. The servants did not know you had changed your mind. 305

Mrs. Bell. Was ever any thing so cross ? Tell his lordship I have company ; I am busy ; I am not well ; any thing, don't let him come in. Make haste, dispatch : I won't see him.

Mrs. Love. I beg I may not hinder you : I shall take my leave.

Mrs. Bell. By no means. Our conversation grows interesting. I positively will not see my lord.

Mrs. Love. I can't agree to that. You must see his lordship. I can step into another room. 315

Mrs. Bell. Will you be so good?—You will find something to amuse you in that cabinet. [*Points to a door in the back scene.*] We must talk farther. My lord sha'n't stay long.

Mrs. Love. Nay, but if you stand upon ceremony——

Mrs. Bell. Very well: I'll contrive it. This is a lover of mine. A lover and a husband are the same thing. Perhaps it will divert you to hear how I manage him. I hear him on the stairs. Make haste: Mignonet, shew the way.

[*Mrs. Lovemore and Mignonet go out at the back scene.*]

Mrs. Bell. Let me see how I look to receive him. 325

[*Runs to her glass.*]

Enter LOVEMORE, with a Star and Garter, as Lord

ETHERIDGE.

Love. *A heav'nly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears,
Repairs her smiles——*

Mrs. Bell. Repairs her smiles, my lord! You are satirical this morning. Pray, my lord, are my features out of repair, like an old house in the country, that wants a tenant?

Love. Nay, now you wrest my words from their visible intention. You can't suppose that I impute to such perfect beauty the least want of repair, whatever may be the case, ma'am, with regard to the want of a tenant. 335

Mrs. Bell. Oh! then your opinion is, that I want a tenant. And perhaps you think I am going to put up a bill to signify to all passers-by, that here is a mansion to be let, enquire of the Widow Bellmour. I like your notion; I don't think it would be a bad scheme. Shall I try it?

Love. A palace needs no such invitation. Its natural beauty attracts admiring eyes. But who can bid up to the price? The person who is able to do it——

Mrs. Bell. Will be happy ; I know that is what you are going to say. But he must do homage for it : and then I will let it to none but a single gentleman. Do you know any body whom these conditions will suit ?

Love. Those conditions, ma'am—[*Aside.*] What the devil does she mean ? I am not detected, I hope.—To be sure, ma'am, those conditions—And—none but single gentlemen will presume to—— 351

Mrs. Bell. And then it must be a lease for life. But that will never do ; nobody will be troubled with it. I shall never get it off my hands : do you think I shall, my lord ?

Love. There must be very little taste left, if you have not a number of bidders. You know the ambition of my heart ; you know I am devoted to you, upon any terms, even though it were to be bought with life.

Mrs. Bell. Heavens ! what a dying swain you are ! And does your lordship mean to be guilty of matrimony ? Lord ! what a question have I asked ? To be sure, I am the giddiest creature. My lord, don't you think me a strange madcap ?

Love. A vein of wit, like yours, that springs at once from vivacity and sentiment, serves to exalt your beauty, and give animation to every charm. 365

Mrs. Bell. Upon my word, you have said it finely ! But you are in the right, my lord. Your pensive melancholy beauty is the most insipid thing in nature. And yet we often see features without a mind ; and the owner of them sits in the room with you, like a mere vegetable, for an hour together, till, at last, she is incited to the violent exertion of, ' Yes, sir'—' I fancy not, ma'am'—and then a matter of fact conversation ! ' Miss Beverly is going to be married to Captain Shoulder-knot—My Lord Mortgage has had another tumble at hazard—Sir Harry Wilding has lost his election——They say short aprons are coming into fashion.' 376

Love. Oh ! a matter of fact conversation is insupportable.

Mrs. Bell. But you meet with nothing else. All in great spirits about nothing, and not an idea among them. Go to Ranelagh, or to what public place you will, it is just the same. A lady comes up to you; ‘How charmingly you look!—But, my dear m’em, did yon hear what happened to us the other night? We were going home from the opera—you know my aunt Roly-Poly; it was her coach. There was she and Lady Betty Fidget—What a sweet blonde! How do you do, my dear? [*Curtsy as to another going by.*] My Lady Betty is quite recovered; we were all frightened about her; but Doctor Snake-root was called in; no, not Doctor Snake-root, Doctor Bolus; and so he altered the course of the medicines, and so my Lady Betty is purely now.—Well, there was she, and my aunt, and Sir George Bragwell—a pretty man Sir George—finest teeth in the world—Your ladyship’s most obedient—[*Curtsy.*] We expected you last night, but you did not come.—He, he, he!—and so there was Sir George and the rest of us; and so, turning the corner of Bond-street, the brute of a coachman—I humbly thank your grace [*Curtsies.*]—the brute of a coachman overturned us, and so my aunt Roly-poly was frightened out of her wits; and Lady Betty has had her nerves again. Only think! such accidents!—I am glad to see you look so well; *a l’honneur*;’ he, he he!

401

Love. Ho, ho! you paint to the life. I see her moving before me in all her airs.

Mrs. Bell. With this conversation their whole stock is exhausted, and away they run to cards. Quadrille has murdered wit!

Love. Ay, and beauty too. Cards are the worst enemies to a complexion: the small-pox is not so bad. The passions throw themselves into every feature: I have seen the countenance of an angel changed, in a moment, to absolute de-

formity: the little loves and graces that sparkled in the eye, bloomed in the cheek, and smiled about the mouth, all wing their flight, and leave the face, which they before adorned, a prey to grief, to anger, malice, and fury, and the whole train of fretful passions.

415

Mrs. Bell. And the language of the passions is sometimes heard upon those occasions.

Love. Very true, ma'am; and if, by chance, they do bridle and hold in a little, the struggle they undergo is the most ridiculous sight in nature. I have seen a huge oath quivering on the pale lip of a reigning toast for half an hour together, and an uplifted eye accusing the gods for the loss of an odd trick. And then, at last, the whole room in a Babel of sounds. 'My lord, you flung away the game.—Sir George, why did not you rough the spade?—Captain Hazard, why did not you lead through the honours?—Ma'am, it was not the play—Pardon me, sir—but, ma'am—but, sir—I would not play with you for straws; don't you know what Hoyle says?—If A and B are partners against C and D, and the game nine all, A and B have won three tricks, and C and D four tricks; C leads his suit, D puts up the king, then returns the suit; A passes, C puts up the queen, and B trumps it;' and so A and B, and C and D are bandied about; they attack, they defend, and all is jargon and confusion, wrangling, noise, and nonsense; and high life, and polite conversation——
Ha, ha, ha!

436

Mrs. Bell. Ho, ho! the pencil of Hogarth could not do it better. And yet one is dragged to these places. One must play sometimes. We must let our friends pick our pockets now and then, or they drop our acquaintance. Do you ever play, my lord?

Love. Play, ma'am?—[*Aside.*] What does she mean? I must play the hypocrite to the end of the chapter.—Play?

—Now and then, as you say, one must, to oblige, and from necessity ; but from taste, or inclination, no ; I never touch a card.

Mrs. Bell. Oh ! very true ; I forgot. You dedicate your time to the muses ; a downright rhyming peer. Do you know, my lord, that I am charmed with your song ?

Love. Are you ? 450

Mrs. Bell. Absolutely ; and I really think you would make an excellent Vauxhall poet.

Love. Nay, now you flatter me.

Mrs. Bell. No, as I live ; it is very pretty. And do you know that I can sing it already ? Come, you shall hear how I murder it. I have no voice to-day, but you shall hear me.

[Sings.

*Attend, all ye fair, and I'll tell you the art
To bind ev'ry fancy with ease in your chains ;
To hold in soft fetters the conjugal heart,
And banish from HYMEN his doubts and his pains.* 460

*When Juno was deck'd with the Cestus of Love,
At first she was handsome ; she charming became ;
With skill the soft passions it taught her to move,
To kindle at once, and to keep up the flame.*

*'Tis this gives the eyes all their magic and fire,
The voice-melting accents ; impassions the kiss ;
Confers the sweet smile, that awakens desire,
And plants round the fair each incentive to bliss.*

*Thence flows the gay chat, more than reason that charms ;
The eloquent blush, that can beauty improve ;* 470
*The fond sigh, the fond vow, the soft touch that alarms ;
The tender disdain, the renewal of love.*

*Ye fair, take the Cestus, and practise its power :
The mind unaccomplish'd, mere features are vain ;
With wit, with good humour, enliven each hour,
And the loves, and the graces, shall walk in your train.*

Love. My poetry is infinitely obliged to you. It grows into sense as you sing it. Your voice, like the Cestus of Venus, bestows a grace upon every thing. 479

Mrs. Bell. Oh! fulsome; I sing horridly. [*Goes to the glass.*] How do I look?—Don't tell me, my lord: you are studying a compliment, but I am resolved to mortify you; I won't hear it.—Well! have you thought of any thing? Let it pass; 'tis too late now. Pray, my lord, how came you to choose so grave a subject as connubial happiness?

Love. Close and particular that question! [*Aside.*

Mrs. Bell. Juno! Hymen! doubts and pains! one would almost swear that you have a wife at home who sat for the picture. 489

Love. Ma'am, the——[*Embarrassed.*] The compliment——you are only laughing at me——the subject, from every day's experience——[*Aside.*] Does she suspect me?——the subject is common——Bachelors' wives, you know——ha, ha!——And when you inspire the thought; when you are the bright original, it is no wonder that the copy——

Mrs. Bell. Horrid! going to harp on the old string. Odious solicitations! I hate all proposals. I am not in the humour. You must release me now: your visit is rather long. I have indulged you a great while. And besides, were I to listen to your vows, what would become of poor Sir Brilliant Fashion? 501

Love. Sir Brilliant Fashion!

Mrs. Bell. Do you know him?

Love. I know whom you mean. I have seen him; but

that's all. He lives with a strange set, and does not move in my sphere. If he is a friend of yours, I have no more to say. 507

Mrs. Bell. Is there any thing to say against him?

Love. Nay, I have no knowledge of the gentleman. They who know him best, don't rate him high. A sort of current coin that passes in this town. You will do well to beware of counterfeits.

Mrs. Bell. But this is very alarming——

Enter MIGNIONET, in a violent Hurry.

Mign. My dear madam, I am frightened out of my senses. The poor lady——where are the hartshorn drops?

Love. The lady! what lady?

Mign. Never stand asking what lady. She has fainted away all on a sudden: she is now in strong hysterics; give me the drops. 519

Mrs. Bell. I must run to her assistance. Adieu, my lord. I shall be at home in the evening. Mignionet, step this way. Your lordship will excuse me: I shall expect to see you. Come, Mignionet, make haste; make haste.

[Exit with Mignionet.]

Love. I hope the lady has not overheard me. What a villain am I to carry on this scheme against so much beauty, innocence, and merit! And to wear this badge of honour for the darkest purposes! And then my friend Sir Brilliant, will it be fair to supplant him?——Pr'ythee, be quiet, my dear conscience! none of your meddling: don't interrupt a gentleman in his pleasures. Don't you know, my good friend, that love has no respect for persons, but soars above all laws of honour and of friendship? No reflection; have her I must, and that quickly too, or she will discover all. Besides, this is my wife's fault: why does not she make home agree-

able? I am willing to be happy; I could be constant to her, but she is not formed for happiness. What the devil is Madam Fortune about now?—[*Sir Brilliant sings within.*]—Sir Brilliant, by all that's infamous. Confusion! no place to hide me? no escape? The door is locked. Mignonet, Mignonet, open the door.

540

Mign. [*Within.*] You must not come in here.

Love. What shall I do? This star and this ribbon will bring me to disgrace. Away with this tell-tale evidence.—[*Takes off the ribbon.*] Go, thou blushing devil, and hide thyself for ever.

[*Puts it in his pocket.*]

Enter Sir BRILLIANT, singing.

Sir Bril. Mrs. Bellmour, I have such a story for you—How!—Lovemore?

Love. Your slave, Sir Brilliant, your slave.

[*Hiding the star with his hat.*]

Sir Bril. I did not think you had been acquainted here.

Love. You are right. I came in quest of you. I saw the lady. I was drawn hither by mere curiosity. We have had some conversation; and I made it subservient to your purposes. I have been giving a great character of you. 553

Sir Bril. You are always at the service of your friends. But what's the matter? what are you fumbling about?

[*Pulls the hat.*]

Love. 'Sdeath! have a care: don't touch me.

[*Puts his handkerchief to his breast.*]

Sir Bril. What the devil is the matter?

Love. Oh! keep off—[*Aside.*] Here's a business.—Taken in the old way: let me pass.—I have had a fling at Lord Etheridge; he will be out of favour with the widow: I have done you that good.—Racks and torments, my old complaint!

[*Wanting to pass him.*]

Sir Bril. What complaint? You had better sit down.

Love. No, no; air, the air. I must have a surgeon. A stroke of a tennis-ball! My Lord Racket's unlucky left-hand. Let me pass. There is something forming here. [*Passes him.*] To be caught is the devil. [*Aside.*] Don't mention my name. You will counteract all I have said.—Oh! torture, torture!—I will explain to you another time. Sir Brilliant, yours. I have served your interest——Oh! there is certainly something forming. [*Exit.*]

Sir Bril. What does all this mean?—So, so, Mrs. Love-more's suspicions are well founded.—The widow has her private visits, I see. Yes, yes; there is something forming here.——

575

Enter Mrs. BELLMOUR.

So: here she comes. The whole shall be explained. I hope, ma'am, that I don't interrupt you with any piquet-friend?

Mrs. Bell. You are always a torment: what brings you hither?

Sir Bril. There are times, ma'am, when a visit—

Mrs. Bell. Is unseasonable, and yours is so now. How can you tease me?

Sir Bril. I thought as much.—There are some things that may require to be discussed between us.

585

Mrs. Bell. Reserve them all for another time. I can't hear you now. You must leave me. There is a lady taken ill in the next room.

Sir Bril. And here has been a gentleman taken ill in this room.

Mrs. Bell. How troublesome! You must be gone. Do you dispute my will and pleasure?—Fly this moment.

Sir Bril. But ma'am—Nay, if you insist upon it— [*Goes.*]

Mrs. Bell. But, sir!—I will be absolute: you must leave me. [*Puts him out.*] There, and now I'll make sure of the door.

556

Enter Mrs. LOVEMORE, leaning on MIGNIONET.

Mign. This way, madam: here is more air in this room.

Mrs. Bell. How do you find yourself? Pray, sit down.

Mrs. Love. My spirits were too weak. I could not support it any longer: such a scene of perfidy!

Mrs. Bell. You astonish me: what perfidy?

Mrs. Love. Perfidy of the blackest dye; I told you that you were acquainted with my husband.

Mrs. Bell. Acquainted with your husband! [*Angrily.*

Mrs. Love. A moment's patience—Yes, madam, you are acquainted with him.—The base man, who went hence but now——

Mrs. Bell. Sir Brilliant Fashion?

Mrs. Love. No; your Lord Etheridge, as he calls himself——

610

Mrs. Bell. Lord Etheridge! What of him, pray?

Mrs. Love. False, dissembling man! he is my husband, ma'am: not Lord Etheridge, but plain Mr. Lovemore; my Mr. Lovemore.

Mrs. Bell. And has he been base enough to assume a title to ensnare me to my undoing?

Mign. [*Going.*] Well, for certain, I believe the devil's in me; I always thought him a sly one. [*Exit.*

Mrs. Love. To see him carrying on this dark design—to see the man whom I have ever esteemed and loved—the man whom I must still love—esteem him, I fear, I never can—to see him before my face with that artful treachery, it was too much for sensibility like mine; I felt the shock too severely, and I sunk under it.

Mrs. Bell. I am ready to sink this moment with amazement. I saw him, for the first time, at old Mrs. Loveit's. She introduced him to me. The appointment was of her own making. 628

Mrs. Love. You know Mrs. Loveit's character, I suppose.

Mrs. Bell. The practised veteran!—Could I suspect that a woman, in her style of life, would lend herself to a vile stratagem against my honour? That she would join in a conspiracy against her own sex?—Mr. Lovemore shall never enter these doors again.—I am obliged to you, ma'am, for this visit; to me a providential incident. I am sorry for your share in it. The discovery secures my peace and happiness; to you it is a fatal conviction, a proof unanswerable, against the person to whom you are joined for life.

Mrs. Love. After this discovery, it cannot be for life. I am resolved not to pass another day under his roof. 640

Mrs. Bell. Hold, hold: no sudden resolutions. Consider a little: passion is a bad adviser. This may take a turn for your advantage.

Mrs. Love. That can never be: I am lost beyond redemption.

Mrs. Bell. Don't decide too rashly. Come, come, the man who has certain qualities is worth thinking about, before one throws the hideous thing away for ever. Mr. Lovemore is a traitor; but is not he still amiable! And, besides, you have heard his sentiments. That song points at something. Perhaps you are a little to blame. He did not write upon such a subject, without a cause to suggest it. We will talk over this matter coolly. You have saved me, and I must return the obligation. You shall stay dinner with me.

Mrs. Love. Excuse me. Mr. Lovemore may possibly go home. He shall hear of his guilt, while the sense of it pierces here, and wounds me to the quick. 657

Mrs. Bell. Now there you are wrong : take my advice first. I will lay such a plan as may ensure him yours for ever.— Come, come, you must not leave me yet. [*Takes her hand.*] Answer me one question : don't you still think he has qualities that do in some sort apologize for his vices ?

Mrs. Love. I don't know what to think of it : I hope he has.

Mrs. Bell. Very well then. I have lost a lover ; you may gain one. Your conduct upon this occasion may reform him ; and let me tell you, that the man who has it in his power to atone for his faults, should not be entirely despised.—Let the wife exert herself ; let her try her powers of pleasing, and, take my word for it,

*The wild gallant no more abroad will roam,
But find his lov'd variety at home.*

671

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

An Apartment in LOVEMORE'S House. Mr. and Mrs. LOVE-MORE at Table after Dinner : Servants taking Things out of the Room.

Lovemore. [*Filling a glass.*]

I WONDER you are not tired of the same eternal topic.

[*Sipping his wine.*]

Mrs. Love. If I make it an eternal topic, it is for your own good, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. I know I have your good wishes, and you have mine. All our absent friends, Mrs. Lovemore. [*Drinks.*]

Mrs. Love. If you would but wish well to yourself, sir, I should be happy.—But in the way you go on, your health

must be ruined ; day is night, and night day ; your substance squandered ; your constitution destroyed ; and your family quite neglected. 10

Love. Family neglected ! you see I dined at home, and this is my reward for it.

Mrs. Love. You dined at home, sir, because something abroad has disconcerted you. You went, I suppose, after I saw you at Lady Constant's, to your old haunt, your friend, Mrs. Loveit——

Love. Mrs. Loveit ! ha ! ha ! I dropt her acquaintance long ago. No, my love, I drove into the city, and spent the rest of the morning upon business. I had long accounts to settle with old Discount the banker. 20

Mrs. Love. And that to be sure engrossed all your time. Business must be minded. Did you find him at home ?

Love. It was by his own appointment. I went to his house directly after I parted from you. I have been no where else. Matters of account always fatigue me.

Mrs. Love. I would not be too inquisitive, sir.

Love. Oh ! no ; you never are. I staid at the banker's the rest of the time ; and I came straight from his house to have the pleasure of dining with you. [*Fills a glass of wine.*]

Mrs. Love. Were there any sincerity in that declaration, I should be happy. A tavern life has hitherto been your delight. I wonder what delight you can find in such an eternal round of gaming, riot, and dissipation. Will you answer me one question. 34

Love. With great pleasure,—[*Aside.*—]—if it is not inconvenient.

Mrs. Love. Lay your hand on your heart, and tell me,—Have I deserved this usage ?

Love. My humble service to you, my love. [*Drinks.*]

Mrs. Love, I am sure I have never been deficient in any

one point of the duty I owe you. You won my heart, and I gave it freely. 42

Love. [*Going to sleep.*] It is very true.

Mrs. Love. Your interest has been mine. I have known no pleasure unconnected with your happiness. Diversions, show, and pomp, have had no allurements for me.

Love. [*Dropping asleep.*] Yes,—you are right—just as you please—

Mrs. Love. Had I been inclined to follow the example of other women, your fortune would have felt it before now. You might have been thousands out of pocket; but your interest has been the object of my attention; and your convenience— 53

Love. [*Turns his chair from her.*] You reason very—you reason admir—ably—admir—ably—always—al—always—gay—and—enter—entertaining—

[*Going to sleep.*]

Mrs. Love. Marriage is generally considered as an introduction to the great scene of the world. I thought it a retreat to less noisy and serener pleasures. What is called polite company [*He falls fast asleep.*] was not my taste. You was lavish in expence; I was, therefore, an œconomist. From the moment marriage made me yours, the pleasure arising from your company—There! fast asleep! Agreeable company indeed!—This is ever his way. [*She rises.*] Unfeeling man!—It is too plain that I am grown his aversion. Mr. Lovemore! [*Looking at him.*] you little think what a scene this day has brought to light.—And yet he hopes with falsehood to varnish and disguise his treachery. How mean the subterfuge! shall I rouse him now, and tax him with his guilt? My heart is too full: reproach will only tend to exasperate, and perhaps make him irreconcilable. The pride that can stoop to low and wretched artifice, but ill

can brook detection. Let him rest for the present. The widow Bellmour's experiment may answer better.—I will try it at least.—Oh! Mr. Lovemore, you will break my heart.

[Looks at him, and exit.

Love. [Talking in his sleep.] I do listen—I am not asleep. [Sleeps and nods.] You are very right;—always right—I am only thinking a little. No—no—no—[Mutters indistinctly.] It was not two o'clock—in bed—in bed by twelve—Sir Bashful is an oaf—The widow Bellmour—[Sleeps, and his head rolls about.]—What's the matter? [Waking.] I beg your pardon; I was beginning to nod. What did you say, my dear? [Leans on the table without looking about.] One cannot always, you know—[Turns about.] 'Sdeath! she is gone! Oh! fast asleep. This is ever the way when one dines at home. Let me shake it off. [Rises.] What's o'clock? No amusement in this house; what shall I do? The widow?—I must not venture in that quarter. My evil genius, Sir Bril-
liant, will be busy there. Is any body in the way? I must sally out. My dear Venus, favour your votary this after-
noon:

91

———Your best arms employ,

All wing'd with pleasure, and all tipt with joy.

[Exit.

SCENE II.

Changes to Sir BASHFUL's. Enter Lady CONSTANT and FUR-
NISH.

Lady Cons. Who brought this letter?

Fur. A servant of Mrs. Lovemore's: he waits an answer.

Lady Cons. My compliments to Mrs. Lovemore, and I shall wait upon her.

Fur. Yes, ma'am.

[*Going.*

Lady Cons. And hark ye, Furnish; have the things been carried to Sir Brilliant, as I ordered? 100

Fur. I have obeyed your ladyship's commands. The steward went himself. Mr. Pounce, your ladyship knows, is a trusty body. You may depend upon his care.

Lady Cons. Go, and send Mrs. Lovemore her answer. She may depend upon my being with her in time. [*Exit Furnish.*] What can Mrs. Lovemore want? [*Reads.*] '*Ladyship's company to a card-party; but cards are the least part of my object. I have something of higher moment in view, and the presence of my friends is absolutely necessary.*' There is some mystery in all this. What does she mean? I shall go, and then the scene will clear up: those diamond buckles embarrass me more than Mrs. Lovemore's unintelligible letter. Diamond buckles to me! From what quarter? Who could send them? Nobody but Sir Brilliant. I am right in my conclusion: they came from him. Who could take the liberty but a person of his cast? A presuming man! But I have mortified his vanity. Before this time, he has found his diamonds thrown back upon his hands, with the disdain which such confidence deserves.—But if I have made a mistake!—Oh! no; no danger. Has not Sir Brilliant made overtures to me? Has not he declared himself? He sees Sir Bashful's behaviour, and his vanity plumes itself upon that circumstance. To give me my revenge against a crazy and insufferable husband, he would fain induce me to ruin myself with a coxcomb. Besides; he heard the whole of Sir Bashful's dispute about diamonds and trinkets: the thing is clear; it was Sir Brilliant sent them; and by that stratagem he hopes to bribe me into compliance.—That bait will never take; though here comes one, who, I am sure, deserves to be treated without a grain of ceremony.

Enter Sir BASHFUL.

Sir Bash. Here she is. Now let me see whether she will take any notice of the present I sent her. She has reason to be in good humour, I think.—Your servant, madam.

Lady Cons. Your address is polite, sir.

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] Still proud and obstinate!—Has any thing happened to disturb the harmony of your temper?

Lady Cons. Considering what little discord you make, it is a wonder that my temper is not always in tune.

Sir Bash. If you never gave me cause, madam—

Lady Cons. Oh! for mercy's sake, truce with altercation. I am tired out with the eternal violence of your temper. Those frequent starts of passion hurry me out of my senses: and those unaccountable whims, that hold such constant possession of you—

144

Sir Bash. Whims, madam?—Not to comply with you in every thing, is a whim, truly. Must I yield to the exorbitant demands of your extravagance? When you laid close siege to me for diamond baubles, and I know not what, was that a whim of mine? Did I take that fancy into my head without cause, and without sufficient foundation?

Lady Cons. Well, we have exhausted the subject. Have not you told me a thousand times that there is no living with me? I agree to it. And have not I returned the compliment? We have nothing new to say; and now, all that remains, is to let the lawyer reduce to writing our mutual opinions, and so we may part with the pleasure of giving each other a most woful character.

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] The buckles have had no effect. Stubborn! she has received them, and won't own it.

159

Lady Cons. A dash of your pen, sir, at the foot of certain articles now preparing, will make us both easy. [*Going.*

Sir Bash. If we don't live happily, it is your own fault.

Lady Cons. That is very odd.

Sir Bash. If you would control your passion for play——

Lady Cons. Quite threadbare !

Sir Bash. I have still a regard for you.

Lady Cons. Worn out to frippery !—I can't hear any more. The law will dress it up in new language for us, and that will end our differences. [Exit.]

Sir Bash. [Alone.] I must unburthen my heart : there is no time to be lost. I love her ; I admire her ; she inflames my tenderest passions, and raises such a conflict here in my very heart, I cannot any longer conceal the secret from her. I'll go and tell her all this moment.—But then that meddling fiend, her maid, will be there : po ! I can turn her out of the room : but then the jade will suspect something. Her ladyship may be alone : I'll send to know where she is. Who is there ? Sideboard——

Enter SIDEBOARD.

Sir Bash. Go and tell your lady that—— [Pauses.]

Side. Did your honour want me ? 180

Sir Bash. No matter ; it does not signify.—[Aside.] I shall never be able to tell her my mind : a glance of her eye, and my own confusion, will undo all.

Side. I thought your honour called.

Sir Bash. [Aside.] A thought comes across me ; I'll write her a letter. Yes, yes, a letter will do the business. Sideboard, draw that table this way—Reach me a chair.

Side. There, your honour.

Sir Bash. Do you stay while I write a letter. You shall carry it for me. [Sits down to write.]

Side. Yes, sir. I hope he has an intrigue upon his hands. A servant thrives under a master that has his private amusements. Love on, say I, if you are so given ; it will bring grist to my mill. 194

Sir Bash. [Writing.] This will surprise her. Warm,

passionate, and tender ! and yet it does not come up to what I feel.

Side. What is he at ?—I may as well read the newspaper. [*Takes it out of his pocket.*] What, in the name of wonder, is all this ?—Ha, ha ! [*Bursts into a loud laugh.*] I never heard the like of this before. Oh, ho, ho, ho ! 201

Sir Bash. What does the scoundrel mean ? [*Stares at him.*

Side. Ha, ha, ha ! I can't help laughing.

Sir Bash. Does the villain suspect me ? [*Rises.*] Hark ye, sirrah, if ever I find that you dare listen at any door in my house—

Side. Sir !

Sir Bash. Confess the truth : have not you been listening to my conversation with Mr. Lovemore this morning ?

Side. Who, I, sir ? I would not be guilty of such a thing : I never did the like in all my days. 211

Sir Bash. What was you laughing at ?

Side. A foolish thing in the newspaper, sir, that's all. I'll read it to your honour. [*Reads.*] We hear that a new comedy is now in rehearsal, and will speedily be performed, intitled, *The Amorous Husband, or, The Man in Love with his own Wife.*

Sir Bash. And what do you see to laugh at ?

Side. See, sir ? I have lived in a great many families, and never heard of the like before.

Sir Bash. [*Aside.*] There, there, there !—I shall be the butt of my own servants.—Sirrah, leave the room. And let me never hear that you have the trick of listening in my house. 223

Side. No, sir—the Man in Love with his own Wife !

[*Exit laughing.*

Sir Bash. What does the varlet mean ?—No matter—I have finished my letter, and it shall be sent this moment. —But then, if I should get into a comedy ? Po ! no more scruples. I'll seal it directly.—Sideboard—

Enter SIDEBOARD.

Sir Bash. [*Sealing the letter.*] I have opened my heart to her. What do you bring your hat and stick for?

Side. To go out with your honour's letter. 230

Sir Bash. You have not far to go. Take this, and let nobody see you.

Side. I warrant me, your honour. [*Exit.*]

Sir Bash. I feel much lighter now. A load is taken off my heart.

Enter SIDEBOARD.

Sir Bash. What do you come back for?

Side. A word or two, by way of direction, if you please, sir.

Sir Bash. Blockhead! give it to me—[*Aside.*] If I direct it, he finds me out.—Go about your business: I have no occasion for you: leave the room. 241

Side. Very well, sir.—Does he think to manage his own intrigues? If he takes my commission out of my hands, I shall give him warning. The vices of our masters are all the vails a poor servant has left. [*Exit.*]

Sir Bash. What must be done?—Mr. Lovemore could conduct this business for me. He is a man of address, and knows all the approaches to a woman's heart. That fellow Sideboard coming again?—No, no; this is lucky. Mr. Lovemore, I am glad to see you. 250

Enter LOVEMORE.

Love. A second visit, you see, in one day; entirely on the score of friendship.

Sir Bash. And I thank you for it; heartily thank you.

Love. I broke away from the company at the St. Alban's,

on purpose to attend you. Well, I have made your lady easier in her mind, have not I?

Sir Bash. We don't hit it at all, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. No!

Sir Bash. I think she has been rather worse since you spoke to her. 260

Love. A good symptom that. [Aside.

Sir Bash. She has received the diamond buckles. They were delivered to her maid sealed up, and the man never staid to be asked a question. I saw them in her own hand; but not a syllable escaped her. She was not in the least softened, obstinate as a mule!

Love. The manner of conveying your presents was not well judged. Why did you not make me the bearer?

Sir Bash. I wish I had. She talks of parting: and so, to avoid coming to extremities, I have even thought of telling her the whole truth at once. 271

Love. How? acquaint her with your passion?

Sir Bash. Ay, and trust to her honour. I could not venture to speak; I should blush, and falter, and look silly; and so I have writ a letter to her. Here it is, signed and sealed, but not directed. I got into a puzzle about that. Servants, you know, are always putting their own construction upon things.

Love. No doubt: and then your secret flies all over the town.

Sir Bash. That's what alarmed me. You shall write the superscription, and send it to her. 282

Love. No, that won't do. Give her a letter under your hand? I'll speak to her for you: let me try how her pulse beats.

Sir Bash. But a letter may draw an answer from her, and then, you know—[Smiling at him.]—I shall have it under her hand.

Love. I don't like this hurry : we had better take time to consider of it. 290

Sir Bash. No, I cann't defer the business of my heart a single moment. It burns like a fever here. Sit down and write the direction ; I'll step and send the servant. He shall carry it, as if it were a letter from yourself.

Enter SIDEBOARD.

Side. Sir Brilliant Fashion is below, sir.

Love. What brings him ? He will only interrupt us. Go and talk to him, Sir Bashful ; hear what he has to say ; amuse him ; any thing, rather than let him come up.

Sir Bash. I am gone : he sha'n't molest you. 299

[*Exit with* Sideboard.]

Love. Fly, make haste ; and don't let him know that I am here.—A lucky accident this ; I have gained time by it. All matters were in a right train, and he himself levelling the road for me, and now this letter blows me up into the air at once. Some unlucky planet rules to-day. First, the Widow Bellmour ; a hair-breadth 'scape I had of it ; and now almost ruined here ! What in the name of wonder has he writ to her ?—Friendship and wafer, by your leave.—But will that be delicate ?—Po ! honour has always a great deal to preach upon these occasions ; but then the business of my love !—Very true ; the passions need but say a word, and their business is done. [*Opens the letter and reads.*] This must never reach her. I'll write a letter from myself.—[*Sits down, writes, and starts up.*] I hear him coming : no ; all safe. [*Writes.*] This will do :—vastly well. Her husband's inhumanity ! Ay, mention that.—The diamonds may be a present from me : yes, I'll venture it—There, there ; that will do—Long adored—Ay—sweetest revenge—Ay—eternal admirer—Lovemore.—Now, now let me see it.—Admirable ! this will do the business. [*Seals the letter.*]

Enter Sir BASHFUL.

Sir Bash. Well, have you sent it? 320

Love. Not yet: I am writing the direction.

Sir Bash. And where is that blockhead?—Sideboard!

Enter SIDEBOARD.

Sir Bash. Numskull, why don't you wait?—Mr. Love-more wants you.

Love. Step and deliver this to your lady, and, if she pleases, I will wait upon her.

Sir Bash. Charming!—Take it up stairs directly.

Side. Up stairs, sir? My lady is in the next room.

Sir Bash. Take it to her; make haste, begone. [*Exit Sideboard.*] I hope this will succeed: I shall be for ever obliged to you, and so will her ladyship. 331

Love. I hope she will, and I shall be proud to serve her.

Sir Bash. You are very good. She won't prove ungrateful, I dare answer for her.—I should like to see how she receives the letter.—The door is conveniently open—I will have a peep. Ay, there; there she sits.

Love. Where, Sir Bashful?

Sir Bash. Hush, no noise.—There, do you see her? She has the letter in her hand—This is a critical moment: I am all over in a tremble. 340

Love. Silence; not a word. She opens it.—[*Aside.*] Now, my dear Cupid, befriend me now, and your altar shall smoke with incense.

Sir Bash. She colours!

Love. I like that rising blush; a soft and tender token.

Sir Bash. She turns pale.

Love. The natural working of the passions.

Sir Bash. And now she reddens again.—What is she at now?—There, she has torn the letter in two!—I am a lost, and undone man. *[Walks away.]*

Love. She has flung it away with indignation: I am undone too. *[Aside, and walks away from the door.]*

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore, you see what it is all come to.

Love. I am sorry to see so haughty a spirit.

Sir Bash. An arrogant, ungrateful woman! to make such a return to so kind a letter!

Love. Ay, so kind a letter!

Sir Bash. Did you ever see such an insolent scorn?

Love. I never was so disappointed in all my life.

Sir Bash. A letter full of the tenderest protestations!

Love. Yes; an unreserved declaration of love! 361

Sir Bash. Made with the greatest frankness; throwing myself at her very feet.

Love. Did she once smile! was there the faintest gleam of approbation in her countenance?

Sir Bash. She repaid it all with scorn, with pride, contempt, and insolence. I cannot bear this; despised, spurned, and treated like a puppy.

Love. There it stings—like a puppy, indeed!

Sir Bash. Is there a thing in nature so mortifying to the pride of man, as to find oneself rejected and despised by a fine woman, who is conscious of her power, and triumphs in her cruelty? 373

Love. It is the most damnable circumstance!—

Sir Bash. My dear Mr. Lovemore, I am obliged to you for taking this matter so much to heart.

Love. I take it more to heart than you are aware of.

Sir Bash. This is mortifying; enough to make one ashamed all the rest of one's life.

Love. I did not expect this sullen ill-humour.

Sir Bash. Did you ever know so obstinate, so uncomplying a temper?
382

Enter Sir BRILLIANT.

Sir Bril. Sir Bashful, I forgot to tell you—

Love. He again! he hunts me up and down, as the vice did the devil, with a dagger of lath, in the old comedy.

[*Aside.*

Sir Bril. Hey!—what's the matter?—You seem both out of humour: what does this mean? Have you quarrelled?

Sir Bash. No, sir, no quarrel.—Why would my booby servant let him in again?
[*Aside.*

Sir Bril. Strike me stupid, but you look very queer upon it.—Lovemore is borrowing money, I suppose: Sir Bashful is driving a hard bargain, and you can't agree about the premium. Sir Bashful, let my friend Lovemore have the money.
394

Sir Bash. Money!—what does he mean?

Sir Bril. Both out of humour, I see: well, as you will. You have no reason to be in harmony with yourselves; my stars shine with a kinder aspect. Here, here, behold a treasury of love. I came back on purpose to shew it to you. [*Takes a shagreen case out of his pocket.*] See what a present I have received; a magnificent pair of diamond buckles, by all that's amiable.

Love. How?

Sir Bash. [*Walking up to him.*] A pair of diamond buckles!

Sir Bril. How such a present should be sent to me is more than I can explain at present. Perhaps my friend, Lovemore, gained some intelligence in the quarter where I surprised him to-day, on a visit which I little suspected.

Love. That was to serve you: I know nothing of this business.
410

Sir Bril. The pain in your side, I hope, is better.

Love. Po! this is only to distract your attention, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. So I suppose. And was this a present to you?

Sir Bril. A present, sir. The consequence of having some tolerable phrase, a person, and a due degree of attention to the service of the ladies.—Don't you envy me, Sir Bashful?

Sir Bash. I can't but say I do.—[*Turns to Lovemore.*] My buckles, by all that's false in woman! 420

Love. Take no notice.—[*Walks aside.*] Has he supplanted me here too, as well as with the widow?

Sir Bril. What's the matter with you both?—Burning with envy!

Sir Bash. And I suppose an elegant epistle, or a well-penned billet-doux, accompanied this token of the lady's affection.

Sir Bril. That would have been an agreeable addition, but it is still to come. Too many favours at once might overwhelm a body. A country-looking fellow, as my people tell me, left this, curiously sealed up, at my house: he would not say from whence he came; I should know that in time, was all they could get from him, and I am now panting to learn from whence this mighty success has attended me. Sir Bashful, I came, saw, and conquered. Ha, ha, ha, ha!

Sir Bash. But may not this be from some lady, who imagines that you sent it, and therefore chooses to reject your present? 438

Sir Bril. Oh, no; that cannot be the case. A little knowledge of the world would soon convince you that ladies do not usually reject presents from the man who has the good fortune to please by his manner, his taste for dress, and a certain *je ne sçai quoi* in his person and conversation.

Sir Bash. So I believe.—[*Walks aside.*] What say you to this, Mr. Lovemore?

Love. She would not have torn a letter from him.

Sir Bril. No, Sir Bashful; a present from me would not have been returned back upon my hands.

Sir Bash. I dare say not.—[*To Lovemore.*] I suppose she will give him my three hundred pounds into the bargain. 451

Love. After this, I shall wonder at nothing.

Sir Bril. What mortified countenances they both put on!

[*Looks at them, and laughs.*]

Sir Bash. [*Walking up to Sir Brilliant.*] And I suppose you expect to have this lady?

Sir Bril. No doubt of it. This is the forerunner, I think. Hey, Lovemore?—Sir Bashful, this it is to be in luck. Ha, ha!

[*Laughs at them both.*]

Love. and Sir Bash. [*Both forcing a laugh.*] Ha, ha!

Sir Bril. You both seem strangely piqued.—Lovemore, what makes you so uneasy? 461

Love. You flatter yourself, and you wrong me—I—I—

[*Walks away.*]

Sir Bash. He is a true friend: he is uneasy on my account.

[*Aside, and looking at Lovemore.*]

Sir Bril. And, Sir Bashful, something has dashed your spirits. Do you repine at my success?

Sir Bash. I can't but say I do, sir.

Sir Bril. Oh! very well; you are not disposed to be good company. *A l'honneur*, gentlemen: finish your money matters. Lovemore, where do you spend the evening?

Love. A good evening to you, Sir Brilliant: I am engaged: Business with Sir Bashful, you see— 471

Sir Bril. Well, don't let me be of inconvenience to you. Fare ye well, gentlemen. Thou dear pledge of love [*Looking*

at the buckles], thus let me clasp thee to my heart.—Sir Bashful, your servant. [Exit.

Sir Bash. What think you now, Mr. Lovemore?

Love. All unaccountable, sir.

Sir Bash. By all that's false, I am gulled, cheated, and imposed upon. I am deceived, and dubbed a rank cuckold. It is too clear: she has given him the buckles, and I suppose my bank-notes have taken the same course.—Diamond buckles, and three hundred pounds, for Sir Brilliant! A reward for his merit!

483

Love. He is the favourite, and I have been working for him all this time.

Sir Bash. I now see through all her artifices. My resolution is fixed. If I can but get ocular demonstration of her guilt; if I can but get the means of proving to the whole world that she is vile enough to cuckold me, I shall then be happy.

Love. Why, that will be some consolation! 491

Sir Bash. So it will: kind Heaven grant me that at least! make it plain that she dishonours me, and I am amply revenged.—Hark! I hear her coming. She shall know all I think, and all I feel. I have done with her for ever.

Love. [*Aside.*] Let me fly the impending storm. If I stay, detection and disgrace pursue me—Sir Bashful, I am sorry to see matters take this turn. I have done all in my power; and since there is no room to hope for success, I take my leave, and wish you a good night. 500

Sir Bash. No, no; you shall not leave me in this distress. You shall hear me tell her her own, and be a witness of our separation. [Holding him.

Love. Excuse me: after what has passed, I shall never be able to endure the sight of her. Fare you well; I must be gone: good night, Sir Bashful. [Struggling to go,

Sir Bash. You are my best friend : I cannot part with you.
[*Stands between him and the door.*] Stay and hear what she has
to say for herself ; you will see what a turn she will give to
the business. 510

Love. [*Aside.*] What turn shall I give it ?—Confusion !
here she comes : I must weather the storm.

Enter Lady CONSTANT.

Lady Cons. After this behaviour, Mr. Lovemore, I am surprised, sir, that you can think of staying a moment longer in this house.

Love. Madam, I—'sdeath ! I have no invention to assist me at a pinch. [*Aside.*

Sir Bash. Mr. Lovemore is my friend, madam, and I desire he will stay in my house as long as he pleases.—Hey, Lovemore ! [*Looks at him, and smiles.*

Love. [*Aside.*] All must out, I fear. 521

Lady Cons. Your friend, Sir Bashful !—And do you authorise him to take this unbecoming liberty ? Have you given him permission to send me a letter, so extravagant in the very terms of it ?

Love. [*Aside.*] Ay, now 'tis coming, and impudence itself has not a word to say.

Sir Bash. I desired him to send that letter, madam.

Love. Sir Bashful desired me, ma'am.

[*Bowing respectfully.*

Sir Bash. I desired him.

Love. All at his request, ma'am. 531

Lady Cons. And am I to be made your sport ?—I wonder, Mr. Lovemore, that you would condescend to make yourself a party in so poor a plot. Do you presume upon a trifling mark of civility, which you persuaded me to accept of this morning ? Do you come disguised under a mask of friend-

ship to help this gentleman in his design against my honour, and my happiness ?

Love. [*Aside.*] Fairly caught, and nothing can bring me off—— 540

Sir Bash. A mask of friendship !—He is a true friend, madam ; he sees how ill I am treated, and let me tell you, there is not a word of truth in that letter.

Love. Not a syllable of truth, ma'am—[*Aside.*] This will do : his own nonsense will save me.

Sir Bash. It was all done to try you, madam.

Love. Nothing more, ma'am : merely to try you.

Sir Bash. By way of experiment only : just to see how you would behave upon it. 549

Love. Nothing else was intended ; all to try you, ma'am.

Lady Cons. You have been both notably employed. The exploit is worthy of you. Your snare is spread for a woman ; and if you had succeeded, the fame of so bright an action would add mightily to two such illustrious characters.

Sir Bash. A snare spread for her ! Mark that, Mr. Lovemore : she calls it ensnaring.

Love. Ensnared to her own good. [*To Sir Bashful.*]—He has pleaded admirably for me. [*Aside.*

Lady Cons. As to you, Sir Bashful, I have long ago ceased to wonder at your conduct : you have lost the power of surprising me ; but when Mr. Lovemore becomes an accomplice in so mean a plot—— 562

Sir Bash. I am in no plot, madam, and nobody wants to ensnare you : do we, Lovemore ?

Love. Sir Bashful knows that no harm was intended.

Sir Bash. Yes, I am in the secret, and my friend Lovemore meant no harm.

Love. If the letter had succeeded, Sir Bashful knows there would have been no ill consequence.

Sir Bash. No harm in nature; but I now see how things are; and since your ladyship will listen to nothing for your own good, it is too plain, from all that has passed between us, that our tempers are by no means fitted for each other, and I am ready to part whenever you please: nay, I will part.

575

Lady Cons. And that is the only point in which we can agree, sir.

Sir Bash. Had the letter been sent from another quarter, it would have met with a better reception: we know where your smiles are bestowed.

Lady Cons. Deal in calumny, sir; give free scope to malice; I disdain your insinuations.

Sir Bash. The fact is too clear, and reproaches are now too late. This is the last of our conversing together; and you may take this by the way, you are not to believe one syllable of that letter.

586

Love. There is not a syllable of it deserves the least credit, ma'am.

Sir Bash. It was all a mere joke, madam: was not it, Lovemore?—And as to your being a fine woman, and as to any passion that any body has conceived for you, there was no such thing; you can witness for me, Lovemore, can't you?

Lady Cons. Oh! you are witnesses for one another.

Love. Sir Bashful knows the fairness of my intentions, and I know his.—[*Aside.*] He has acquitted me better than I expected, thanks to his absurdity.

Lady Cons. Go on, and aggravate your ill usage, gentlemen.

599

Sir Bash. It was all a bam, madam, a scene we thought proper to act. Let us laugh at her.

[*Goes up to Lovemore.*

Love. With all my heart.—[*Aside.*] A silly blockhead! I can't help laughing at him. [*Laughing heartily.*

Sir Bash. [*Laughing with him.*] Ha, ha, ha!—all a bam; nothing else; a contrivance to make sport for ourselves—hey, Lovemore?

Lady Cons. This usage is insupportable. I shall not stay for an explanation. Two such worthy confederates!—Is my chair ready there? You may depend, sir, that this is the last time you will see me in this house. [*Exit.*

Sir Bash. Agreed; a bargain; with all my heart. Lovemore, I have managed this well. 612

Love. Charmingly managed! I did not think you had so much spirit.

Sir Bash. I have found her out. The intrigue is too plain. She and Sir Brilliant are both detected.

Love. I never suspected that Sir Brilliant was the happy man. I wish I had succeeded, had it been only to mortify his vanity.

Sir Bash. And so do I: I wish it too: but never own the letter: deny it to the last. 621

Love. You may depend upon my secrecy.

Sir Bash. I am for ever obliged to you. A foolish woman! how she stands in her own light!

Love. Truly I think she does. But since I have no interest with her ladyship, I shall now sound a retreat, and leave matters to your own discretion. Success attend you. [*Going.*

Sir Bash. You must not forsake me in this distress.

Love. Had your lady proved tractable, I should not have cared how long I had staid. But since things are come to this pass, I shall now go and see what kind of reception I am to meet with from Mrs. Lovemore. 632

Sir Bash. Don't let her know that you have a regard for her.

Love. Oh ! no ; I see the consequence.—[*Aside.*] Well off this time ; and, Madam Fortune, if I trust you again, you shall play me what prank you please. Sir Bashful, yours.

[*Going.*

Sir Bash. A thousand thanks to you. And, hark ye, if I can serve you with your lady——

639

Love. I am much obliged to you ; but I shall endeavour to go on, without giving you the trouble of assisting me. And, do you hear ? assure my Lady Constant, that I meant nothing but to serve your interest.

[*Exit.*

Sir Bash. Rely upon my management. I can acquit you.—My Lady Constant ! Lady Constant !—Let me chase her from my thoughts : can I do it ? Rage, fury, love—no more of love ! I am glad she tore the letter. Odso ! yonder it lies. It is only torn in two, and she may still piece the fragments together. I'll pick up the letter this moment : it shall never appear in evidence against me. As to Sir Brilliant, his motions shall be watched ; I know how to proceed with madam ; and if I can but prove the fact, every body will say that I am ill used by her.

[*Exit.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

An Apartment at Mr. LOVEMORE'S. Enter Mrs. LOVEMORE, elegantly dressed ; MUSLIN following her.

Muslin.

WHY, to be sure, ma'am, it is so for certain, and you are very much in the right of it.

Mrs. Love. I fancy I am : I see the folly of my former conduct. I am determined never to let my spirits sink into a melancholy state again.

Mus. Why, that's the very thing, ma'am; the very thing I have been always preaching up to you. Did not I always say, Sec company, ma'am, take your pleasure, and never break your heart for any man? This is what I always said.

Mrs. Love. And you have said enough: spare yourself the trouble now. 11

Mus. I always said so. And what did the world say? Heavens bless her for a sweet woman! and a plague go with him for an inhuman, barbarous, bloody—murdering brute.

Mrs. Love. Well, truce with your impertinence; your tongue runs on at such a rate.

Mus. Nay, don't be angry: they did say so indeed. But, dear heart, how every body will be overjoyed when they find you have plucked up a little! As for me, it gives me new life, to have so much company in the house, and such a racketing at the door with coaches and chairs, enough to hurry a body out of one's wits. Lard, this is another thing, and you look quite like another thing, ma'am, and that dress quite becomes you. I suppose, ma'am, you will never wear you, negligee again. It is not fit for you indeed, ma'am. It might pass very well with some folks, ma'am, but the like of you——

Mrs. Love. Will you never have done? Go and see who is coming up stairs. 29

Enter Mrs. BELLMOUR.

Mrs. Love. Mrs. Bellmour, I revive at the sight of you. Muslin, do you step, and do as I ordered you.

Mus. What the deuce can she be at now? [Exit.

Mrs. Bell. You see I am punctual to my time.—Well, I admire your dress of all things. It's mighty pretty.

Mrs. Love. I am glad you like it. But, under all this appearance of gaiety, I have at the bottom but an aching heart.

Mrs. Bell. Be ruled by me, and I'll answer for the event. Why really, now you look just as you should do.—Why neglect so fine a figure?

Mrs. Love. You are so obliging! 40

Mrs. Bell. And so true.—What was beautiful before, is now heightened by the additional ornaments of dress; and if you will but animate and inspire the whole with those graces of the mind which I am sure you possess, the impression cannot fail of being effectual upon all beholders; even upon the depraved mind of Mr. Lovemore.—You have not seen him since, have you?

Mrs. Love. He dined at home, but was soon upon the wing to his usual haunts. 49

Mrs. Bell. If he does but come home time enough, depend upon it my plot will take. And have you got together a good deal of company?

Mrs. Love. Yes, a tolerable party.

Mrs. Bell. That's right: shew him that you will consult your own pleasure.

Mrs. Love. Apropos, as soon as I came home I received a letter from Sir Brilliant, in a style of warmth and tenderness that would astonish you. He begs to see me again, and has something particular to communicate. I left it in my dressing-room; you shall see it by-and-by: I took your advice, and sent him word he might come. The lure brought him hither immediately: he makes no doubt of his success with me. 63

Mrs. Bell. Well! two such friends as Sir Brilliant and Mr. Lovemore, I believe, never existed!

Mrs. Love. Their falsehood to each other is unparalleled. I left Sir Brilliant at the card-table: as soon as he can disengage himself, he will quit his company in pursuit of me. I forgot to tell you, my Lady Constant is here.

Mrs. Bell. Is she ?

70

Mrs. Love. She is, and has been making the strangest discovery : Mr. Lovemore has had a design there too !

Mrs. Bell. Oh ! I don't doubt him : but the more proof we have the better.

Mrs. Love. There is sufficient proof : you must know, ma'am—[*A rap at the door.*] As I live and breathe, I believe this is Mr. Lovemore.

Mrs. Bell. If it is, every thing goes on as I could wish.

Mrs. Love. I hear his voice, it is he. How my heart beats !

80

Mrs. Bell. Courage, and the day's our own. He must not see me yet : where shall I run ?

Mrs. Love. In there, ma'am. Make haste ; I hear his step on the stairs.

Mrs. Bell. Success attend you. I am gone. [Exit.]

Mrs. Love. I am frightened out of my senses. What the event may be I fear to think ; but I must go through with it,

Enter LOVEMORE.

Mrs. Love. You are welcome home, sir.

Love. Mrs. Lovemore, your servant. [*Without looking at her.*]

90

Mrs. Love. It is somewhat rare to see you at home so early.

Love. I said I should come home, did not I ? I always like to be as good as my word.—What could the widow mean by this usage ? to make an appointment, and break it thus abruptly !

[*Aside.*]

Mrs. Love. He seems to muse upon it.

[*Aside.*]

Love. [*Aside.*] She does not mean to do so treacherous a thing as to jilt me ? Oh, Lord ! I am wonderfully tired.

[*Yawns and sinks into an armed chair.*]

Mrs. Love. Are you indisposed, my dear? 100

Love. No, my love; I thank you, I am very well;—a little fatigued only, with jolting over the stones all the way into the city this morning. I have paid a few visits this afternoon.—Confoundedly tired.—Where's William?

Mrs. Love. Do you want any thing?

Love. Only my cap and slippers. I am not in spirits, I think. [*Yawns.*]

Mrs. Love. You are never in spirits at home, Mr. Lovemore. 109

Love. I beg your pardon: I never am any where more cheerful. [*Stretching his arms.*] I wish I may die if I an't very happy at home,—very [*Yawns.*] very happy!

Mrs. Love. I can hear otherwise. I am informed that Mr. Lovemore is the promoter of mirth and good humour wherever he goes.

Love. Oh! no, you over-rate me; upon my soul you do.

Mrs. Love. I can hear, sir, that no person's company is so acceptable to the ladies; that your wit inspires every thing: you have your compliment for one, your smile for another, a whisper for a third, and so on, sir: you divide your favours, and are every where, but at home, all whim, vivacity, and spirit. 122

Love. Ho! ho! [*Laughing.*] how can you talk so? I swear I can't help laughing at the fancy. All whim, vivacity, and spirit! I shall burst my sides. How can you banter one so?—I divide my favours too!—Oh, heavens! I can't stand this raillery: such a description of me!—I that am rather saturnine, of a serious cast, and inclined to be pensive! I can't help laughing at the oddity of the conceit.—Oh Lord! oh Lord! [*Laughs.*]

Mrs. Love. Just as you please, sir. I see that I am ever to be treated with indifference. [*Walks across the stage.*]

Love. [*Rises, and walks a contrary way.*] I can't put this widow Bellmour out of my head. [*Aside.*

Mrs. Love. If I had done any thing to provoke this usage, this cold, determined contempt— [*Walking.*

Love. I wish I had done with that business entirely; but my desires are kindled, and must be satisfied. [*Aside.*

[*They walk for some time silently by each other.*

Mrs. Love. What part of my conduct gives you offence, Mr. Lovemore? 140

Love. Still harping upon that ungrateful string!—but pr'ythee don't set me a laughing again.—Offence!—nothing gives me offence, child!—you know I am very fond— [*Yawns and walks.*]—I like you of all things, and think you a most admirable wife;—prudent, managing,—careless of your own person, and very attentive to mine;—not much addicted to pleasure,—grave, retired, and domestic; you govern your house, pay the tradesmen's bills, [*Yawns.*] scold the servants, and love your husband:—upon my soul, a very good wife!—as good a sort of a wife [*Yawns.*] as a body might wish to have.—Where's William? I must go to bed.

Mrs. Love. To bed so early! Had not you better join the company?

Love. I shan't go out to-night.

Mrs. Love. But I mean the company in the dining-room,

Love. Company in the dining-room! [*Stares at her.*

Mrs. Love. Yes: I invited them to a rout.

Love. A rout in my house!—and you dressed out too!—What is all this?

Mrs. Love. You have no objection, I hope. 160

Love. Objection!—No, I like company, you know, of all things; I'll go and join them; who are they all?

Mrs. Love. You know 'em all; and there's your friend Sir Brilliant.

Love. Is he there? I shall be glad to see him. But pray, how comes all this about?

Mrs. Love. I intend to see company often.

Love. Do you?

Mrs. Love. Ay, and not look tamely on, while you revel luxuriously in a course of pleasure. I shall pursue my own plan of diversion. 171

Love. Do so, ma'am: the change in your temper will not be disagreeable.

Mrs. Love. And so I shall, sir, I assure you. Adieu to melancholy, and welcome pleasure, wit, and gaiety.

[She walks about and sings.]

Love. What the devil has come over her? And what, in the name of wonder, does all this mean?

Mrs. Love. Mean, sir!—It means, it means—how can you ask me what it means?—Well, to be sure, the sobriety of that question!—Do you think a woman of spirit can have leisure to tell her meaning, when she is all air, alertness, rapture, and enjoyment. 182

Love. She is mad!—stark mad!

Mrs. Love. You're mistaken, sir—not mad, but in spirits, that's all. Am I too flighty for you?—Perhaps I am: you are of a saturnine disposition, inclined to think a little or so. Well, don't let me interrupt you; don't let me be of any inconvenience. That would be the unpolitest thing; a married couple to be interfering and encroaching on each other's pleasures! Oh, hideous! it would be Gothic to the last degree. Ha, ha, ha!

Love. *[Forcing a laugh.]* Ha, ha!—Ma'am, you—ha, ha! you are perfectly right. 193

Mrs. Love. Nay, but I don't like that laugh now: I positively don't like it. Can't you laugh out as you were used

to do? For my part, I'm determined to do nothing else all the rest of my life.

Love. This is the most astonishing thing! Ma'am, I don't rightly comprehend——

Mrs. Love. Oh Lud! oh Lud!—with that important face! Well, but come! what don't you comprehend? 201

Love. There is something in this treatment that I don't so well——

Mrs. Love. Oh! are you there, sir! How quickly they, who have no sensibility for the peace and happiness of others, can feel for themselves, Mr. Lovemore!—But that's a grave reflection, and I hate reflection.

Love. What has she got into her head? This sudden change, Mrs. Lovemore, let me tell you—— 209

Mrs. Love. Nay, don't be frightened: there is no harm in innocent mirth, I hope: never look so grave upon it. I assure you, sir, that though, on your part, you seem determined to offer constant indignities to your wife, and though the laws of retaliation would in some sort exculpate her, if, when provoked to the utmost, exasperated beyond all enduring, she should, in her turn, make him know what it is to receive an injury in the tenderest point—— 217

Love. Madam!

[*Angrily.*

Mrs. Love. Well, well, don't be alarmed. I shan't retaliate: my own honour will secure you there; you may depend upon it.—Will you come and play a game at cards?—Well, do as you like; you won't come? No, no, I see you won't——What say you to a bit of supper with us?——Nor that neither?——Follow your inclinations: it is not material where a body eats, you know; the company expects me;—adieu, Mr. Lovemore, yours, yours. [*Exit singing.*

Love. This is a frolic I never saw her in before!—Laugh all the rest of my life!—laws of retaliation!—an injury

in the tenderest point!—the company expects me—
adieu! yours, yours!—[*Mimicking her.*] What the devil is
all this? Some of her female friends have been tampering
with her. So, so: I must begin to look a little sharp after
madam. I'll go this moment into the card-room, and watch
whom she whispers with, whom she ogles with, and every
circumstance that can lead to— [Going.]

Enter MUSLIN in a hurry.

Mus. Madam, madam—here's your letter; I would not
for all the world that my master—

Love. What, is she mad too? What's the matter, wo-
man? 239

Mus. Nothing, sir—nothing: I wanted a word with my
lady, that's all, sir.

Love. You would not for the world that your master—
What was you going to say?—what paper's that?

Mus. Paper, sir!

Love. Paper, sir! Let me see it.

Mus. Lord, sir! how can you ask a body for such a thing?
It's a letter to me, sir, a letter from the country: a letter
from my sister, sir. She bids me to buy her a *shiver de frize*
cap, and a sixteenth in the lottery; and tells me of a number
she dreamt of, that all sir: I'll put it up. 250

Love. Let me look at it. Give it me this moment. [*Reads.*]
To Mrs. Lovemore!—Brilliant Fashion. This is a letter
from the country, is it?

Mus. That, sir—that is—no, sir—no;—that's not
sister's letter. If you will give me that back, sir, I'll shew
you the right one.

Love. Where did you get this?

Mus. Sir!

Love. Where did you get it?—Tell me truth.

Mus. Dear heart, you fright a body so—in the parlour, sir—I found it there. 261

Love. Very well!—leave the room.

Mus. The devil fetch it, I was never so out in my politics in all my days. [Exit.

Love. A pretty epistle truly!—[Reads.] ‘When you command me, my dearest Mrs. Lovemore, never to touch again upon the subject of love, you command an impossibility.—You excite the flame, and forbid it to burn. Permit me once more to throw myself on my knees, and implore your compassion.’—Compassion with a vengeance on him!—‘Think you see me now, with tender, melting, supplicating eyes, languishing at your feet.’—Very well, sir—‘Can you find it in your heart to persist in cruelty?—Grant me but access to you once more, and, in addition to what I already said this morning, I will urge such motives.’—Urge motives, will ye?—‘as will convince you, that you should no longer hesitate, in gratitude, to reward him who here makes a vow of eternal constancy and love. 278

BRILLIANT FASHION.’

So! so! so! your very humble servant, Sir Brilliant Fashion!—This is your friendship for me, is it?—You are mighty kind indeed, sir—but I thank you as much as if you had really done me the favour: and, Mrs. Lovemore, I’m your humble servant too. She intends to laugh all the rest of her life! This letter will change her note. Yonder she comes along the gallery, and Sir Brilliant in full chase of her. They come this way. Could I but detect them both now! I’ll step aside, and who knows but the devil may tempt them to their undoing. A polite husband I am: there’s the coast clear for you, madam. [Exit.

Enter Mrs. Lovemore and Sir Brilliant.

Mrs. Love. I have already told you my mind, Sir Brilliant. Your civility is odious, your compliments fulsome, and your solicitations insulting.—I must make use of harsh language, sir : you provoke it. 294

Sir Bril. Not retiring to solitude and discontent again, I hope, madam ! Have a care, my dear Mrs. Lovemore, of a relapse.

Mrs. Love. No danger, sir : don't be too solicitous about me. Why leave the company ! Let me entreat you to return, sir. 300

Sir Bril. By Heaven, there is more rapture in being one moment *vis-a-vis* with you, than in the company of a whole drawing-room of beauties. Round you are melting pleasures, tender transports, youthful loves, and blooming graces, all unfelt, neglected, and despised, by a tasteless, cold, unimpassioned husband, while they might be all so much better employed to the purposes of ecstasy and bliss.

Mrs. Love. I am amazed, sir, at this liberty.—What action of my life has authorized this assurance ?—I desire, sir, you will desist. Were I not afraid of the ill consequences that might follow, I should not hesitate a moment to acquaint Mr. Lovemore with your whole behaviour. 312

Sir Bril. She won't tell her husband !—A charming creature, and blessings on her for so convenient a hint. She yields, by all my hopes !—What shall I say to overwhelm her senses in a flood of nonsense ? [Aside. 320

Go my heart's envoys, tender sighs make haste,—

Still drink delicious poisons from thy eye,—

Raptures and paradise

Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be press'd. 320

[Forcing her all this time.

Enter Mr. Lovemore.

Love. Hell and distraction! this is too much.

Sir Bril. What the devil's the matter now? [*Kneels down to buckle his shoe.*] This confounded buckle is always plaguing me. Lovemore! I rejoice to see thee. [*Looking at each other.*]

Love. And have you the confidence to look me in the face?

Sir Bril. I was telling your lady, here, of the most whimsical adventure—— 327

Love. Don't add the meanness of falsehood to the black attempt of invading the happiness of your friend. I did imagine, sir, from the long intercourse that has subsisted between us, that you might have had delicacy enough, feeling enough, honour enough, sir, not to meditate an injury like this.

Sir Bril. Ay, it's all over, I am detected. [*Aside.*] Mr. Lovemore, I feel that I have been wrong, and will not attempt a vindication of myself. We have been friends hitherto, and if begging your pardon for this rashness will any ways atone—— 337

Love. No, sir, nothing can atone. The provocation you have given me would justify my drawing upon you this instant, did not that lady, and this roof, protect you.

Sir Bril. Harsh language to a friend——

Love. Friend, Sir Brilliant!

Sir Bril. If you will but hear me——

Love. Sir, I insist; I won't hear a word.

Sir Bril. I declare upon my honour——

Love. Honour! for shame, Sir Brilliant: honour and friendship are sacred words, and you profane them both.

Sir Bril. If imploring forgiveness of that lady——

Love. That lady!—I desire you will never speak to that lady. 350

Sir Bril. Can you command a moment's patience?

Love. Sir, I am out of all patience : this must be settled between us : I have done for the present.

Enter Sir BASHFUL.

Sir Bash. Did not I hear loud words among you ? I certainly did. What are you quarrelling about ?

Love. Read that, Sir Bashful. [*Gives him Sir Brilliant's letter.*] Read that, and judge if I have not cause—

[*Sir Bashful reads to himself.*

Sir Bril. Hear but what I have to say—

Love. No, sir, no ; we shall find a fitter time. As for you, madam, I am satisfied with your conduct. I was indeed a little alarmed, but I have been a witness of your behaviour, and I am above harbouring low suspicions. 362

Sir Bash. Upon my word, Mr. Lovemore, this is carrying the jest too far.

Love. It is the basest action a gentleman can be guilty of ; and to a person who never injured him, still more criminal.

Sir Bash. Why so I think. Sir Brilliant, [*To him aside.*] here, take this letter, and read it to him, his own letter to my wife. 370

Sir Bril. Let me see it—

[*Takes the letter.*

Sir Bash. 'Tis indeed, as you say, the vilest action a gentleman can be guilty of.

Love. An unparalleled breach of friendship.

Sir Bril. Not altogether so unparalleled : I believe it will not be found without a precedent—as for example. [*Reads.*

To my Lady CONSTANT—

'Why should I conceal, my dear madam, that your charms have awaken'd my tenderest passion ?'

379

Love. Confusion !—my letter—

[*Aside.*

Sir Bril. [Reading.] ‘*I long have loved you, long adored. Could I but flatter myself—*

Lovemore walks about uneasy; *Sir Brilliant* follows him.

Sir Bash. There, Mr. Lovemore, the basest treachery!

Sir Bril. [Reads.] ‘*Could I but flatter myself with the least kind return.*’

Love. Confusion! let me seize the letter out of his hand.

[*Snatches it from him.*]

Sir Bash. An unparalleled breach of friendship, Mr. Lovemore.

Love. All a forgery, sir; all a forgery. 390

Sir Bash. That I deny; it is the very identical letter my lady threw away with such indignation. She tore it in two, and I have pieced it together.

Love. A mere contrivance to varnish his guilt.

Sir Bril. Ha, ha! my dear Lovemore, we know one another. Have not you been at the same work with the Widow Bellmour?

Love. The Widow Bellmour! If I spoke to her, it was to serve you, sir.

Sir Bril. Are you sure of that? 400

Love. Po! I won’t stay a moment longer among ye. I’ll go into another room to avoid ye all. I know little or nothing of the Widow Bellmour, sir. [*Opens the door.*]

Enter Mrs. BELLMOUR.

Hell and destruction!—what fiend is conjured up here? Zoons! let me make my escape out of the house.

[*Runs to the opposite door.*]

Mrs. Love. I’ll secure this pass: you must not go, my dear.

Love. ’Sdeath, madam, give me way.

Mrs. Love. Nay, don’t be in such a hurry: I want to introduce an acquaintance of mine to you. 409

Love. I desire, madam——

Mrs. Bell. My Lord, my Lord Etheridge; I am heartily glad so see your lordship. [*Taking hold of him.*]

Mrs. Love. Do, my dear, let me introduce this lady to you. [*Turning him to her.*]

Love. Here's the devil and all to do! [*Aside.*]

Mrs. Bell. My lord, this is the most fortunate encounter.

Love. I wish I was fifty miles off. [*Aside.*]

Mrs. Love. Mrs. Bellmour, give me leave to introduce Mr. Lovemore to you. [*Turning him to her.*]

Mrs. Bell. No, my dear ma'am, let me introduce Lord Etheridge to you. [*Pulling him.*] My Lord— 421

Sir Bril. In the name of wonder, what is all this?

Sir Bash. This is another of his intrigues blown up.

Mrs. Love. My dear ma'am, you are mistaken: this is my husband.

Mrs. Bell. Pardon me, ma'am, 'tis my Lord Etheridge.

Mrs. Love. My dear, how can you be so ill-bred in your own house?—Mrs. Bellmour,—this is Mr. Lovemore.

Love. Are you going to toss me in a blanket, madam?—call up the rest of your people, if you are. 430

Mrs. Bell. Pshaw! pr'ythee now, my lord, leave off your humours. Mrs. Lovemore, this is my Lord Etheridge, a lover of mine, who has made proposals of marriage to me.

Love. Confusion! let me get rid of these two furies.

[*Breaks away from them.*]

Sir Bash. He has been tampering with her too, has he?

Mrs. Bell. [*Follows him.*] My lord, I say! my Lord Etheridge! won't your lordship know me?

Love. This is the most damnable accident! [*Aside.*]

Mrs. Bell. I hope your lordship has not forgot your appointment at my house this evening. 440

Love. I deserve all this. [*Aside.*]

Mrs. Bell. Pray, my lord, what have I done, that you treat me with this coldness? Come, come, you shall have a wife: I will take compassion on you.

Love. Damnation! I can't stand it.

[*Aside.*

Sir Bash. Murder will out: murder will out.

Mrs. Bell. Come, cheer up, my lord: what the deuce, your dress is altered! what's become of the star and ribband? And so the gay, the florid, the *magnifique* Lord Etheridge dwindles down into plain Mr. Lovemore, the married man! Mr. Lovemore, your most obedient, very humble servant, sir.

452

Love. I can't bear to feel myself in so ridiculous a circumstance.

[*Aside.*

Sir Bash. He has been passing himself for a lord, has he?

Mrs. Bell. I beg my compliments to your friend Mrs. Loveit: I am much obliged to you both for your very honourable designs.

[*Curtysing to him.*

Love. I was never so ashamed in all my life!

Sir Bril. So, so, so, all his pains were to hide the star from me. This discovery is a perfect cordial to my dejected spirits.

462

Mrs. Bell. Mrs. Lovemore, I cannot sufficiently acknowledge the providence that directed you to pay me a visit, though I was wholly unknown to you; and I shall henceforth consider you as my deliverer.

Love. So! it was she that fainted away in the closet, and be damn'd to her jealousy.

[*Aside.*

Sir Bril. By all that's whimsical, an odd sort of an adventure this! My lord, [*Advances to him.*] my lord, my Lord Etheridge, as the man says in the play, 'Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.'

472

Love. Now he comes upon me.—Oh! I'm in a fine situation.

[*Aside.*

Sir Bril. My lord, I hope that ugly pain in your lordship's side is abated.

Love. Absurd, and ridiculous.

[*Aside.*

Sir Bril. There is nothing forming there, I hope, my lord.

Love. I shall come to an explanation with you, sir.

Sir Bril. The tennis-ball from Lord Racket's unlucky left hand.

481

Love. No more at present, Sir Brilliant. I leave you now to yourselves, and—[*Goes to the door in the back scene,*]—'sdeath, another fiend! I am beset by them.

Enter Lady CONSTANT.

No way to escape?—[*Attempts both stage doors, and is prevented.*

Lady Cons. Mr. Lovemore, it is the luckiest thing in the world that you are come home.

Love. Ay, it is all over—all must come to light.

Lady Cons. I have lost every rubber; quite broke; four by honours against me every time. Do, Mr. Lovemore, lend me another hundred.

491

Love. I would give an hundred pounds you were all in Lapland.

[*Aside.*

Lady Cons. Mrs. Lovemore, let me tell you, you are married to the falsest man; he has deceived me strangely.

Mrs. Love. I begin to feel for him, and to pity his uneasiness.

Mrs. Bell. Never talk of pity; let him be probed to the quick.

Sir Bash. The case is pretty plain, I think, now, Sir Brilliant.

Sir Bril. Pretty plain, upon my soul! Ha, ha!

501

Love. I'll turn the tables upon Sir Bashful, for all this—[*Takes Sir Bashful's letter out of his pocket.*]—where is the mighty harm now in this letter?

Sir Bash. Where's the harm?

Love. [Reads.] 'I cannot, my dearest life, any longer be-
hold——'

Sir Bash. Shame and confusion ! I am undone. [Aside.

Love. Hear this, Sir Bashful——‘ *The manifold vexations, of which, through a false prejudice, I am myself the occasion.*’ 510

Lady Cons. What is all this ?

Sir Bash. I am a lost man. [Aside.

Love. Mind, Sir Bashful.—‘ *I am therefore resolved, after many conflicts with myself, to throw off the mask, and frankly own a passion, which the fear of falling into ridicule has, in appearance, suppressed.*’

Sir Bash. ’Sdeath ! I’ll hear no more of it.

[Snatches at the letter.

Love. No, sir ; I resign it here, where it was directed ; and with it, these notes which Sir Bashful gave me for your use. 520

Lady Cons. It is his hand, sure enough.

Love. Yes, madam, and those are his sentiments, which he explained to me more at large.

Lady Cons. [Reads.] ‘ *Accept the presents which I myself have sent you ; money, attendance, equipage, and every thing else you shall command ; and, in return, I shall only entreat you to conceal from the world that you have raised a flame in this heart, which will ever show me*

Your admirer,

And your truly affectionate husband,

BASHFUL CONSTANT.’

All. Ha, ha !

532

Sir Bril. So, so, so ! he has been in love with his wife all this time, has he ? Sir Bashful, will you go and see the new comedy with me ?

Sir Bash. I shall blush through the world all the rest of my life. [Aside.

Sir Bril. Lovemore, don’t you think it a base thing to invade the happiness of a friend ? or to do him a clandestine wrong ? or to injure him with the woman he loves ? 540

Love. To cut the matter short with you, sir, we have been traitors to each other; a couple of unprincipled, unreflecting profligates.

Sir Bril. Profligates?

Love. Ay, both: we are pretty fellows indeed!

Mrs. Bell. I am glad to find you are awakened to a sense of your error. 547

Love. I am, madam, and am frank enough to own it. I am above attempting to disguise my feelings, when I am conscious they are on the side of truth and honour. With the sincerest remorse I ask your pardon.—I should ask pardon of my Lady Constant too; but the fact is, Sir Bashful threw the whole affair in my way; and, when a husband will be ashamed of loving a valuable woman, he must not be surprised, if other people take her case into consideration, and love her for him.

Sir Bril. Why, 'faith, that does in some sort make his apology.

Sir Bash. Sir Bashful! Sir Bashful! thou art ruined.

[*Aside.*

Mrs. Bell. Well, sir, upon certain terms, I don't know but I may sign and seal your pardon. 561

Love. Terms! what terms?

Mrs. Bell. That you make due expiation of your guilt to that lady. [Pointing to Mrs. Lovemore.

Love. That lady, ma'am!—That lady has no reason to complain.

Mrs. Love. No reason to complain, Mr. Lovemore?

Love. No, madam, none; for whatever may have been my imprudences, they have had their source in your conduct. 570

Mrs. Love. In my conduct, sir?

Love. In your conduct:—I here declare before this company, and I am above misrepresenting the matter; I here

declare, that no man in England could be better inclined to domestic happiness, if you, madam, on your part, had been willing to make home agreeable.

Mrs. Love. There, I confess, he touches me. [Aside.

Love. You could take pains enough before marriage ; you could put forth all your charms ; practise all your arts, and make your features please by rule ; for ever changing ; running an eternal round of variety ; and all this to win my affections : but when you had won them, you did not think them worth your keeping ; never dressed, pensive, silent, melancholy ; and the only entertainment in my house was the dear pleasure of a dull conjugal tête-à-tête ; and all this insipidity, because you think the sole merit of a wife consists in her virtue :—a fine way of amusing a husband, truly ! 588

Sir Bril. Upon my soul, and so it is—— [Laughing.

Mrs. Love. Sir, I must own there is too much truth in what you say. This lady has opened my eyes, and convinced me there was a mistake in my former conduct.

Love. Come, come, you need say no more. I forgive you ; I forgive.

Mrs. Love. Forgive ! I like that air of confidence, when you know that, on my side, it is, at worst, an error in judgment ; whereas, on yours—— 597

Mrs. Bell. Po ! po ! never stand disputing : you know each other's faults and virtues : you have nothing to do but to mend the former, and enjoy the latter. There, there, kiss and friends. There, Mrs. Lovemore, take your reclaimed libertine to your arms.

Love. 'Tis in your power, madam, to make a reclaimed libertine of me indeed.

Mrs. Love. From this moment it shall be our mutual study to please each other.

Love. A match with all my heart. I shall hereafter be

ashamed only of my follies, but never ashamed of owning that I sincerely love you.

Sir Bash. Sha'n't you be ashamed?

610

Love. Never, sir.

Sir Bash. And will you keep me in countenance?

Love. I will.

Sir Bash. Give me your hand. I now forgive you all.—My Lady Constant, I own the letter, I own the sentiments of it—[*Embraces her.*—and from this moment I take you to my heart. Lovemore, zookers! you have made a man of me. Sir Brilliant, come; produce the buckles.

Lady Cons. If you hold in this humour, Sir Bashful, our quarrels are at an end.

620

Sir Bril. And now, I suppose, I must make restitution here—

[*Gives Lady Constant the buckles.*

Sir Bash. Ay, ay, make restitution. Lovemore! this is the consequence of his having some tolerable phrase, and a person, Mr. Lovemore! ha! ha!—

Sir Bril. Why, I own the laugh is against me. With all my heart; I am glad to see my friends happy at last. Lovemore, may I presume to hope for pardon at that lady's hands?

[*Points to Mrs. Lovemore.*

Love. My dear confederate in vice, your pardon is granted. Two sad libertines we have been. But come, give us your hand: we have used each other scurvily: for the future we will endeavour to atone for the errors of our past misconduct.

634

Sir Bril. Agreed; we will henceforward behave like men who have not forgot the obligations of truth and honour.

Love. And now I congratulate the whole company, that this business has had so happy a tendency to convince each of us of our folly.

Mrs. Bell. Pray, sir, don't draw me into a share of your folly.

Love. Come, come, my dear ma'am, you are not without your share of it. This will teach you for the future to be content with one lover at a time, without listening to a fellow you know nothing of, because he assumes a title, and spreads a fair report of himself.

Mrs. Bell. The reproof is just, I grant it.

Love. Come, let us join the company cheerfully, keep our own secrets, and not make ourselves the town-talk.

Sir Bash. Ay, ay; let us keep the secret. 650

Love. What, returning to your fears again? you will put me out of countenance, Sir Bashful.

Sir Bash. I have done.

Love. When your conduct is fair and upright, never be afraid of ridicule. Real honour and generous affection may bid defiance to all the small wits in the kingdom. In my opinion, were the business of this day to go abroad into the world, it might prove a very useful lesson: the men would see how their passions may carry them into the danger of wounding the bosom of a friend; and the ladies would learn, that, after the marriage rites are performed, they ought not to suffer their powers of pleasing to languish away, but should still remember to sacrifice to the Graces.

To win a man, when all your pains succeed, 664

The way to keep him is a task indeed. [Exeunt omnes.]



7. II 52